United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.14

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
7 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 23 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 116: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)

Organization of work

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-65797 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 116: Pattern of conferences (*continued*) (A/56/901; A/57/32 and Corr.1, A/57/228 and Add.1 and 2, A/57/289 and A/57/472)

1. **Mr. Jalang'o** (Kenya) welcomed the efforts made over the past year to improve the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) and the resultant increase in the number of meetings and events held there, a development to which the establishment of a permanent interpretation service had also contributed. He was concerned, however, that a large number of meetings organized by the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) were held away from headquarters. He urged the Secretary-General to take steps to ensure that most, if not all, meetings and activities related to the environment and to human settlements were held in Nairobi. It was his hope that a concerted effort would be made to bring UNON, which was the only United Nations administrative office in the developing world, to the level of the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna.

2. In paragraph II.24 of its resolution 56/242, the General Assembly had reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to consider improving and modernizing the conference facilities at UNON in order to accommodate adequately major meetings and conferences and to report thereon to the Assembly at its resumed fifty-sixth session. No such report had been submitted; that was regrettable since, as the Committee on Conferences had noted in paragraph 50 of its report (A/57/32), the severe constraints inherent in the existing facilities posed a serious challenge for any further increase in utilization. In that connection, he asked why no written report on the utilization of conference services at UNON had been made available for consideration.

3. During the previous session, his delegation had been given an assurance that action would be taken to fill the remaining vacancies in the Interpretation section at UNON. Regrettably, some vacant posts remained, particularly in the Arabic and English booths. He asked why it had proven so difficult to fill those vacancies and whether every effort had been made to do so.

4. **Mr. Kramer** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/57/32). He shared the concern about the decline in the utilization rate for conference resources, which had fallen to 74 per cent largely as a result of a significant drop in New York. He was pleased to note that the Committee on Conferences was prepared to supplement dialogue with additional measures to address the recurrent wastage. The General Assembly should consider aligning the allocation of conference resources with the history of actual utilization.

5. Late issuance of documentation remained a critical problem and he asked what author departments were doing to address it, who was held accountable, and whether information about the overall pattern of non-compliance could be gleaned from the new data-management systems. The larger issue of reducing the number of documents that Member States requested and received was perhaps more urgent than ever.

6. Regarding the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (A/57/289), he said that the Department appeared to be heading in the right direction. He welcomed the commitment to pursue full-system benefits, integrate global management, optimize the use of technology and enhance document planning, production and distribution. He trusted that, in seeking to identify best practices, the Department would look not only within the Organization, but also outside it. The impact of technology on efficiency and productivity would be far-reaching, particularly if the plans to move to a system of complete electronic processing of documents and expand distance work, including remote interpretation, were implemented. Given the Under-Secretary-General's responsibility and accountability for conference services at all duty stations, it would be helpful to have more information about how global management was being put into effect. Formal understandings might be required between the Under-Secretary-General and the Directors-General of the various duty stations, as well as practical tools to facilitate enhanced work planning on a global basis.

7. The integration of the technical servicing secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees into the Department could be expected to contribute to the overall efficiency of the Organization. As to summary

records, their utility was limited under the current circumstances, and he therefore supported the Department's proposal for a study of the practical and cost implications of replacing them with digital recordings.

8. While it was understood that the current workload standards for translators, interpreters and text processors did not take into account the quality of the work accomplished or its intellectual dimension, it remained imperative to have good ways of measuring productivity and assessing cost-effectiveness in the delivery of conference services. He therefore welcomed the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences that workload standards should be updated and that standards should be developed for those occupational groups of language services for which they did not currently exist. There was also a need to develop performance measures for the system as a whole, so that the Department's productivity could be compared with the experience of other entities doing similar work.

9. The delegations on whose behalf he was speaking were committed to high-quality services in all the official languages of the United Nations. They had taken careful note of the important statement on that issue made, at the Committee's 1st meeting, by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Spanish-speaking delegations and agreed that the problems he had raised needed to be examined.

10. Lastly, he expressed appreciation to the staff who provided conference services and emphasized that the discussions about productivity and cost-effectiveness should never be misinterpreted as criticism of their work. Rather, the aim was to ensure that the Department's product was ever more worthy of their efforts.

Organization of work

11. **The Chairman** emphasized the importance of punctuality in avoiding the late start of meetings.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.15

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
11 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 24 October 2002 at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 116: Pattern of conferences (*continued*)

Agenda item 110: Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (*continued*)

Agenda item 111: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 118: Human resources management (*continued*)

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Agenda item 115: Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (*continued*)

Agenda item 119: Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*)

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*)

Organization of work

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-65979 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 116: Pattern of Conferences (*continued*) (A/56/901; A/57/32 and Corr.1, A/57/228 and A/57/228/Add.1 and A/57/228/Add.2, A/57/289, and A/57/472)

1. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the efforts made in increasing utilization of the conference centre in Bangkok and urged that further efforts should be made to promote enhanced coordination of conference planning, with a view to avoiding waste. It was encouraging to note that, as a result of the establishment of a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), the number of events there had increased by 10 per cent, and the number of meetings covered by interpretation had risen by 23.5 per cent during 2001. To account for that increase in activity, the General Assembly had requested the modernization of facilities at UNON to alleviate the shortage of meeting space. The Group would welcome information concerning the status of implementation of that request. Similarly, it would like to know why the vacant posts for interpreters at UNON had yet to be filled.

2. Concerning the chronic problem of late issuance of documentation, he called for strict compliance with the six-week rule. It was imperative that the authors of reports should respect the 10-week rule for the submission of documents, and that the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management should redouble its efforts to improve coordination with author departments, with a view to resolving the problems that led to late issuance. Any reduction in the length of reports must not be allowed to impair either the quality of presentation or the content of reports, and must be entirely consistent. The Group attached considerable importance to preserving the institutional memory of the Organization, which included the provision of rapid, easy access to documents in the six official languages of the United Nations. Summary records and verbatim reports were an essential part of that process. He asked for details of the plan to transfer some editors to the translation services, and would like to know whether that would affect the quality of translations.

3. His Group concurred with the view expressed by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/57/472, para. 6), that it was inadvisable to impose a strict rule on compliance with the calendar of conferences and meetings approved by the General Assembly. A more pragmatic approach should be followed to facilitate the successful conclusion of conferences. He endorsed the view expressed by the Secretary-General (A/57/228, para. 34) that, in order to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional groupings of Member States on a more predictable basis, the corresponding expenses should be included in the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. He requested clarification as to how the substantive and technical capacity of the secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees would be retained if, as proposed, responsibility for them were transferred to the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management.

4. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was ready to adopt the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 2003 (A/57/228/Add.1 and 2). He noted with satisfaction that, in drafting the revised calendar, the Secretariat had taken into account the arrangements referred to in General Assembly resolution 56/242 concerning Orthodox Good Friday.

5. It was vital to make optimum and effective use of the Organization's conference resources. In that connection, his delegation supported the positive coordinating and consultative role of the Committee on Conferences and the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. It would continue to pay close attention to interpretation and translation in the United Nations with a view to ensuring that there was full compliance with the rules on the use of the Organization's official and working languages and that Member States enjoyed equal treatment in terms of the quality and quantity of the services provided.

6. The chronic problem of the late issuance of documentation must be addressed. In that connection, his delegation supported the establishment of an effective system of responsibility and accountability within the Secretariat so as to ensure that documents were submitted for processing in a timely fashion. He noted that delays in issuing documents had a direct impact on the efficiency of the work of deliberative bodies.

7. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the

Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (A/57/289), which provided a critical and constructive analysis of the Department's shortcomings. Concerning the specific proposals made in the report, he emphasized that the solution to the problem of the late issuance of documentation did not lie in the abolition of the six-week rule. His delegation would appreciate an effort on the part of the Secretariat, when difficulties arose, to issue reports within at least four weeks of the opening of sessions. It would then be prepared to consider, based on the outcome, the formal revision of the aforementioned rule. His delegation had no objection to the conduct of a study of the possibility of replacing summary records with digital recordings, provided that no additional resources were required, and it welcomed the plans set out in the report for the use of modern technologies.

8. He expressed support for the proposed strengthening of the role of the Committee on Conferences in assessing the possibility of providing additional conference services. In that connection, there was a need to ensure that the Committee was provided with all the necessary information, including information on unused or redistributed conference resources.

9. His delegation considered it important to maintain the existing division of authority and functions between the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in New York and the United Nations Offices at Vienna, Geneva and Nairobi and supported the recommendation of ACABQ in that regard. It was not convinced of the need for further centralization of authority, particularly in the light of the Secretary-General's statement, in his report on accountability and responsibility (A/55/270), that the series of reforms begun in 1997 had been based on the premise that giving managers more authority and responsibility for decision-making was essential to the improvement of the management of human and financial resources.

10. Lastly, his delegation attached great importance to the provision of efficient and high-quality conference services in the United Nations and was ready to work constructively with other delegations to that end.

11. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that conference services were crucial for the smooth functioning of the intergovernmental process and the execution of mandates by the expert bodies of the United Nations. In that connection, she welcomed the increase in the percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings that had been provided with interpretation services during the period under review. She noted with satisfaction that, as a result of the establishment of a permanent interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), the number of meetings at which interpretation services had been provided had increased by 23.5 per cent in 2001 and the number of events held by 10 per cent; the efforts made during the previous year to improve the utilization of conference services at UNON had paid dividends. Those dividends would have been greater but for the constraints inherent in the existing facilities, which posed a serious challenge for any further increase in utilization. The facilities at the Office should be placed on the same level as those of other United Nations administrative offices worldwide, and the Committee should be informed of the status of the relevant report. The remaining vacancies in the Interpretation Section at UNON should be filled.

12. Her delegation had noted that the budgetary implications of the integration of the technical servicing secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees within the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management would be reported in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005. Lastly, it trusted that the proposed new arrangements for the distribution of documents would be implemented with due regard for the intergovernmental process.

13. **Ms. Afifi** (Morocco) said that her delegation associated itself with the comments made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Committee on Conferences had reached some valid and interesting conclusions. She shared its concern, expressed in paragraphs 34 and 35 of its report (A/57/32), regarding the drop in the overall utilization factor at the four duty stations, and supported its recommendations for achieving optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources. The increased use of interpretation by regional and other groupings of Member States was an encouraging development, given the importance of those groupings to the work of the United Nations. There had also been a welcome growth in conference activity in Bangkok and Nairobi. However, it was regrettable that four posts for Arabic interpreters had yet to be filled in Nairobi.

Given the strategic importance of UNON for Africa and all the South countries, she asked whether a more focused recruitment drive had been considered to strengthen that particular duty station. By the same token, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) should be required to comply with the Headquarters rule and conduct of all of their meetings at UNON.

14. The fresh approach to conference servicing proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management (A/57/289) would make a useful contribution to enhancing its efficiency. She supported efforts to give the Department a more proactive role, and welcomed any improvement in the situation concerning the late issuance of documents. Lastly, her delegation supported any proposal for enhancing the use of new technologies, provided that the difficulties of developing countries in gaining access to such technologies were fully taken into account.

15. **Mr. Naidu** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum countries, paid tribute to the skill and commitment of the staff working in the area of conference management, and supported the new proposals for the Department. He emphasized the principles of participation and partnership in relation to conference services. Owing to the volume and late submission of documents, the difficulty faced by Member States in absorbing and acting adequately on reports was particularly acute for small delegations like those of the Pacific Island Forum countries. He therefore fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to streamline the number, length and timeliness of documents. The increased use of joint debates might reduce the volume of documents and save conference time Member States were, however, also partners in ensuring the smooth functioning of conferences and they could facilitate matters by requesting fewer documents. Such changes would allow small delegations to participate more meaningfully in the work of the Organization.

16. The meetings statistics provided in the report on the pattern of conferences were a stark reminder of the responsibility of Member States for the wastage of the Organization's resources; almost 120 hours had been lost during the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly owing to the late start of meetings. The data should be brought to the attention of other committees, with a view to fostering a more conscious appreciation of the impact of meeting management. He welcomed the proposals for closer coordination in future between the Department and the secretaries and chairmen of committees, in order to develop a shared sense of responsibility for the functioning of the Organization.

17. **Ms. Wang** Xinxia (China) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Noting the decline in the overall utilization rate of conference services in 2001, she expressed the hope that the offices concerned would strengthen the planning process and make timely adjustments to their work programmes so as to reduce wastage. The new proactive approach adopted by the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management and the increased focus on the planning, coordination and management of conference services and documentation would give the Department more control and ensure greater accuracy and predictability in the planning of meetings, result in more efficient use of resources and enhance the quality of meetings and document services. Her delegation would support the establishment of a coordinating body composed of the secretariats of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly to plan and organize meetings jointly.

18. If the proposed slotting system was able to ensure the timely distribution of high-quality documents to Member States it could be a very practical and effective measure. In that connection, she noted that delegations still had to struggle with lengthy reports from some departments, and she urged the Secretariat and, in particular, the author entities to comply with the existing page limits rule.

19. The quality of translation and interpretation was a matter of concern to Member States. Performance measures should reflect not only individual workload standards, but also the quality of the work accomplished, the translator's or interpreter's attitude to his or her work and the incidence of errors. The language services should hold regular dialogues with delegations in order to gauge user satisfaction. There was also a need for an effective and comprehensive monitoring system for translators and interpreters, as well as training programmes for underperformers.

20. **Mr. Pelšs** (Latvia) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the

the representative of Denmark on behalf of the European Union. Regarding the utilization of conference services, he expressed concern that the equivalent of more than 300 meetings had been wasted in 2001 owing to late starts and early endings of meetings. In the same period, the overall utilization factor had dropped six points below the benchmark of 80 per cent. His delegation shared the view expressed in paragraph 37 of the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/57/32) that better planning and flexible adjustment of the programme of work were the best way to reduce wastage. He expressed support for the efforts of the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to address the problem of bodies that were consistent underutilizers of conference services. Other bodies, however, were consistently unable to stay within their allocated meeting time owing to their extensive mandates. His delegation therefore advocated a holistic approach, involving not only consistent underutilizers, but also consistent overutilizers.

21. His delegation strongly supported the Secretary-General's goal of reducing the number of United Nations meetings. The number of resolutions and reports should also be reduced, but that was primarily a responsibility of Member States. His delegation regarded the guidelines on limiting meeting duration, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 56/242, as a useful set of tools for the Secretariat. The reduction of meeting time should not, however, undermine the ability of bodies to fulfil their mandates. In implementing any streamlining process, it was imperative to bear in mind the vision of the Charter and the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

22. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

23. The Fifth Committee was meeting under exceptional circumstances. In the first place, its work had been paralysed for an entire week, thus creating a serious precedent which should not be repeated. His delegation looked to the departments concerned, including the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, for an explanation. In the second place, the Committee was dealing with reports on the strengthening of the United Nations and the improvement of the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

24. The report of the Secretary-General on the latter subject (A/56/289) lacked clarity and precision. It put forward new ideas and new concepts without explaining their purpose. Moreover, the conclusions were not consistent with the introductory remarks. His delegation would be prepared to explain those criticisms in more detail during the informal consultations or, if necessary, during the current meeting. It was by no means clear how the proposal to do away with summary records would improve the performance of the Department; he pointed out that the proposed digital sound recordings were not a valid alternative to summary records. In any case, sound recordings of meetings were already one of the facilities that should be provided in accordance with rule 58 (b) of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Concerning the importance of printed documentation, he said that it was one of the major functions of the Department to assist delegations, in particular through the provision of printed material in the six official languages, to have access to the institutional memory of the Organization. Account should also be taken, in the process of consultation with delegations, of their differing capacity to benefit from the digital revolution. The provision of documents and publications was not only a matter for delegations but was also of concern to the Member States as a whole and, in particular, to research institutes and universities. It would be paradoxical to discuss new methods of distributing documents at a time when the United Nations was clearly failing to ensure equal treatment between the languages on its web site and in the optical disk system. It was clear, therefore, that the United Nations was failing to provide for equal treatment of the official languages of the Organization as required by General Assembly resolution 42/207 C. The proposed structural change in the Department therefore needed to be more fully explained and its objectives better defined.

25. His delegation had noted that a number of the reports requested in General Assembly resolution 56/242 had not been submitted and that no action had been taken on a number of legislative mandates in the same resolution. Moreover, there had been delays in the issuance of summary records, verbatim records, and General Assembly resolutions, and there had been further instances of documents being published on the internet before they were translated and before they were available to delegations in hard copy. There were also many other related shortcomings which his

delegation would address during the informal consultations.

26. The programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 should be published in full with all the amendments adopted by the General Assembly. The failure of the Department to do that was a violation of the relevant provisions of resolution 54/249. His delegation also wished to receive information on the status of translation of the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* into the six official languages and to learn the reasons for the issuance of increasing numbers of documents that had not been translated into the six official languages, in violation of the provisions of resolution 56/242.

27. With reference to the report of the Committee on Conferences (A/57/32 and Corr.1) his delegation welcomed the measures taken concerning Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha and Orthodox Good Friday and also the improvement that had been achieved in the United Nations Office at Nairobi and at the United Nations Centre in Bangkok and asked what steps had been taken to fill posts in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and language posts, particularly the Arabic language posts, in Nairobi. Although his delegation was pleased to note the intention of the Secretariat to improve the issuance of ESCWA documents up to the year 2005, it felt that the problem was an urgent one and ought to be dealt with more expeditiously. His delegation wished to emphasize the importance of paragraph 21 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A, which requested the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in deciding on its meeting schedule, including meetings away from Headquarters, to take into account the programme of work of the Fifth Committee. He expressed the hope that that measure would lead to an improvement in the timely issuance of ACABQ documents, which had become an urgent problem and he emphasized the importance of having the Advisory Committee's reports translated into all six official languages.

28. His delegation also felt that paragraph 18 of the same resolution, which emphasized, in particular, that the primary goal of the introduction of new technology should be to enhance the quality of conference services and ensure their timely provision, would be particularly borne in mind in the context of the Committee's consideration of new technologies.

29. With respect to interpretation, his delegation was concerned about the statements in paragraphs 101 and 102 of the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences (A/57/228), which stated that remote interpretation was not currently considered a priority in international organizations, and that the European Parliament had adopted a recommendation in 2002 advocating the introduction of remote interpretation but that the question as to whether, how and when the European Parliament would follow up on that recommendation remained unanswered. His delegation considered that information concerning such experiments might be useful to the Fifth Committee in its consideration of the introduction of remote interpretation.

30. With reference to the change of name from the Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services to the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, his delegation wondered whether the change indicated a modification of the mandate of the Department, which was regarded as being responsible for providing conference services and not for conference management. That was a matter that called for clarification by the representatives of the Secretary-General.

31. In conclusion, his delegation emphasized the importance of the implementation of all the mandates given to the Department on a non-selective and non-discriminatory basis; excuses that were put forward based on an alleged lack of financial resources should be examined on a case-by-case basis. The shortage of financial resources should not become an excuse for the Department's failure to address some of its mandates; the resolutions of the General Assembly should all be implemented without distinction.

32. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation associated itself with the comments made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The importance of conference services could not be underestimated. The amount of attention devoted to the issue by the General Assembly must be backed up by financial support. The quality of conference services had deteriorated as a direct result of recent budgetary restrictions on the work of the Department. For example, mistakes had begun to appear in publications and translations, the late issuance of documents had caused delays in the work of a number of bodies, and the multilingual character of the Organization had been jeopardized. There was

an urgent need to reinvigorate conference management through enhanced coordination between all the departments concerned and the provision of genuine financial backing.

33. Some of the proposals in the reports under consideration had already been included in the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387), and were already being implemented; it was unclear how the measures proposed in the report on improving the performance of the Department (A/57/289) would relate to them. Referring to paragraph 15 of the latter report, she asked why plenary meetings of the General Assembly and meetings of the Security Council had been singled out for special treatment in terms of meeting schedules and budgetary arrangements. She would also like to know more precisely on what basis the statistics had been compiled concerning interpretation services provided to regional groupings in the biennium 2001-2002, and whether the budgetary restrictions on the Department had curtailed such activities. The proposed abolition of summary records was likely to impair the institutional memory of the Organization and she asked whether such a step was consistent with other decisions taken recently by the General Assembly. Lastly, she failed to understand how attempts to delegate responsibility could be reconciled with the proposed centralization of conference management.

34. **Mr. Niiya** (Japan) said that his delegation shared many of the concerns raised by the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum countries. He emphasized that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had a very important role to play in ensuring the full participation of all Member States in the work of the Organization and in promoting partnership among Member States. He trusted that it would spare no effort in the pursuit of those goals.

35. **Mr. Chen** Jian (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management) noted with satisfaction the degree of support among delegations for the measures set out in the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services (A/57/289). Most of those measures were within the purview of the Secretary-General, and the Department had already been requested to commence implementation. Even in those areas, however, the encouragement and guidance of Member States was very useful. There were two proposals that required action by the Committee: the first related to summary records, and the second to the integration of the technical servicing secretariats of the Fifth and Sixth Committees within the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

36. Summary records were prepared by précis-writers working on the basis of the languages in which statements were delivered. The completed records were sent for translation into the other official languages of the United Nations. That process implied the use of the valuable resources of the Department's translation services. Owing to the increase in the number of reports and the volume of interparliamentary documentation, those services were already operating at full capacity, and delays had arisen in the translation of summary records, which were often issued long after the meetings to which they related. In the context of its self-assessment exercise, the Department had considered how it could remedy that unsatisfactory situation without adversely affecting Member States and it had been advised that digital recordings might constitute a good replacement for summary records. He emphasized that the Committee was not being asked to take a decision on the matter; rather the Department was seeking authorization to undertake a study of the practical and cost implications of introducing digital recordings as a replacement for summary records. Following the conduct of the study, he would report to the Committee, and it would be for delegations themselves to decide whether to proceed.

37. The integration of all the technical secretariats of the Main Committees within one department, namely, the former Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, had initially been proposed in the first round of United Nations reforms in 1997. The rationale for that proposal was explained in General Assembly resolution 52/220. Ultimately, it had been decided that the Department would not undertake the technical secretariat servicing of the Fifth and Sixth Committees or of the Security Council, although it had been recognized that the rationalization of servicing arrangements should lead to greater unity of purpose, greater coherence of efforts at all levels and greater cost-effectiveness, which would result in economies of scale. The Secretary-General had been requested to keep the aforementioned arrangements under review and to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third

session a report in that regard, with a view to considering the possible integration of all technical secretariat servicing resources for all Main Committees of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary and ad hoc bodies and special conferences into the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services. Now that the passage of time had proved the value of integration, the Fifth and Sixth Committee technical servicing secretariats would be transferred to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Since the staff member serving as Secretary of the Sixth Committee had been performing both technical servicing and substantive functions, the technical-servicing secretariat function would have to be separated out for integration into the Department. The exercise would be carried out in such a way as to preserve institutional memory. The Secretary-General had the authority to restructure and regroup the Secretariat, but to the extent that those actions had an impact on the proposed programme budget, the General Assembly, through the Committee, had the right of review.

38. The perennial problem of the late issuance of documentation should be seen against the background of the sheer number of meetings and volume of reports, as described by the Secretary-General in his report on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387). The Department was focusing on two aspects of the problem, namely, its own internal procedures, and the mechanisms for consultation and coordination with submitting departments. As a result of efforts to identify the bottlenecks within the Department, editing and referencing had been pinpointed as weak links. The Department intended to strengthen those functions so that translators could work on the basis of edited, referenced documents; that would enhance the quality of translation and avoid the waste of valuable resources.

39. Concerning consultation and coordination with submitting departments, he said that the Department would enhance upstream planning for documentation, inter alia through the proposed slotting system, which was to be launched in early 2003. The aim was to ensure a higher degree of predictability and to improve the availability of documentation. He could not promise that the problem of the late issuance of documentation would disappear altogether, but the Department would do its best to alleviate it.

40. A further document-related issue was the idea of "print-on-demand" hard copies. That was a concept which should not be misunderstood: the aim was not to eliminate the distribution of hard copies of documents, but to eliminate their unnecessary distribution. The Publishing Section would try to identify needs as accurately as possible in order to ensure that the number of hard copies produced did not exceed the demand for them. The Section was also developing tools to enable users to request hard copies on line. Those efforts would help to produce documentation in a more efficient and cost-effective way. The cooperation of users would be needed, and they would be asked to review their documentation requirements at least twice a year.

41. There were no current plans to reduce or limit in-room distribution of hard copies: they would continue to be available to delegations on request, and the on-line request tools would make them immediately available. Permanent missions would be asked on a voluntary basis to use electronic access to documents where that did not cause them inconvenience and they would have access to portable document format (pdf) copies via the Official Documents System (ODS). From the end of November 2002, the electronic version of the *Journal of the United Nations* would contain a hyperlink to the daily list of documents, where further hyperlinks would provide access to all the documents listed. The only requirement for users would be possession of the Acrobat pdf reader, which could be downloaded from the internet at no charge. Representatives of Member States would also have access to unrestricted documents from their private homes. The Publishing Section would identify missions with limited or no information-technology readiness and look into the feasibility of providing such missions with suitable equipment. He stressed once again that there would be no deterioration of service because of a limit on hard copies, and that no delegation would be obliged to obtain documents exclusively by electronic means.

42. The quality of language services was another issue of perennial concern. It was, and would continue to be, a focus of the Department's efforts. The question was one of determining the causes of the less than satisfactory level of interpretation and, in particular, translation. In the case of translation, the translation

services had had to resort to undesirable working methods because of the increasingly late submission of lengthy documents with tight deadlines. Their staffing levels did not keep pace with the volume of work which they received. To meet the deadlines for translation, long documents had to be divided among several translators. If time was particularly short, the document might be divided among self-revisers and revisers and nobody would have an overall view of the entire translated document or have time to review its component parts for consistency. Extensive reliance on overnight processing of documents had only increased the pressure of time and jeopardized quality.

43. Some of the factors which had harmed quality were beyond the control of the Department, however. First, some translation services, particularly the Arabic Translation Service, did not have enough capacity to cope with certain languages. That meant that the text in the original language had first to be translated into a second language, from which a "relay" translation could be produced. That increased the risks of inaccuracies and mistranslations and harmed the quality of the final product. There were problems in finding qualified translators with the desired combinations of languages. Second, the substantial number of retirements had produced an imbalance between more experienced staff and junior staff in some services, as well as high vacancy rates. The earlier freeze on recruitment had caused the loss of a generation of translators who would now have been advancing to the senior ranks of their services. That, in turn, affected the training of newly recruited staff. Third, the reorganization of the grading structure of the translation services in 1981, when the practice of "self-revision" had been introduced, had caused a structural imbalance between translators and revisers and had resulted in a rate of self-revision far above the maximum desirable level of 45 per cent. Fourth, it had become increasingly difficult to recruit and retain high-calibre language staff because of competition from other international and regional organizations. That competition was particularly acute in the case of the official languages of the United Nations which were also official languages of organizations such as the European Union. The United Nations set high standards by requiring translators to have an excellent knowledge of two official languages in addition to their mother tongue, and there was not a large reserve of translators with those skills. Since the countries from which the United Nations had traditionally recruited such staff were placing less and less emphasis on the teaching of foreign languages, the shortage was likely to become more acute, and the United Nations would find itself competing with other organizations for a shrinking pool of linguists. Those conclusions applied equally to the recruitment of permanent staff and the recruitment of the qualified freelance staff who were needed to increase capacity at peak periods. The Department would use its external studies programme to encourage existing staff to learn additional languages and improve their knowledge of subjects dealt with in the Organization. There was a limit to what it could do, however.

44. A number of delegations had asked why it had been decided to abolish the Official Records Editing Section. The Secretary-General had requested every department to undertake a self-analysis to determine which subprogrammes added considerable value to the activities of the Organization, and which added less or marginal value to those activities. The Department had recognized that the Official Records Editing Section had provided a valuable service: it had, inter alia, been responsible for ensuring the concordance of all six language versions of resolutions. However, it had become clear that pressure of time had sometimes led that concordance exercise to be performed after the resolutions had been adopted. That raised two issues. First, if the changes made as a result of the concordance exercise were significant, the Department's desire to improve linguistic quality would in his view lead it to exceed its authority by altering documents which had already been adopted in plenary meeting by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council or the Security Council. Second, if those changes were not significant, it was likely to be more worthwhile to redeploy valuable human resources to other more urgent tasks such as translation and pre-editing. The Secretary-General had therefore decided to disband the Official Records Editing Section and redeploy those of its staff with the requisite qualifications either to translation or to pre-editing duties. Staff who required it would receive retraining.

45. Linguistic concordance work would continue in order to guarantee quality, but it would take place in the time intervening between the adoption of resolutions by the Main Committees of the General Assembly and the final adoption of texts by the General Assembly. Once again, a prerogative was

being returned to the Member States, which would thus be able to make a final examination of texts submitted to the General Assembly to ensure that the various language versions corresponded to what they had agreed.

46. The issue of global management of conference services had been brought to the attention of the Department in two resolutions: resolution A/56/253, which called on the Secretary-General to ensure that conference services were managed in an integrated manner throughout all duty stations (para. 81), and resolution A/56/242, which requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services was considered the appropriate executive authority to oversee, coordinate and enhance the global management and delivery of United Nations conference services, under the legislative authority of the General Assembly and through oversight and examination by the Committee on Conferences (para. II.3)

47. In paragraphs 31 to 40 of his report on improving the performance of the Department (A/57/289), the Secretary-General set out what would be done to comply with the Member States' wish for the integration of global management. The Department had devoted particular attention to two aspects of the issue: budgetary matters and human resources. Since the establishment of the Department, the conference services of Headquarters and of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi had been integrated into a single section of the programme budget (sect. 2). The rationale had been to achieve economies of scale by pooling finite resources for activities which were similar in nature, and to recognize that cooperation and coordination between duty stations also required financial integration and coherence. As indicated in the report, the Department would enhance monitoring of the use of resources at the various duty stations to ensure that global management became a reality. It was important to point out that the ratio of allotment of resources to each duty station would not be changed. Monitoring of the use of resources would simply be improved in order to ensure that what the Member States had requested was achieved in practice. The same spirit would guide action on the management of human resources. He had promised his colleagues at the other three United Nations Offices that nothing would be done without consulting them. In short, there would be greater centralization at the policy level, but decentralization would be maintained at the operational level.

48. Efforts had been made to improve the situation of the interpretation services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi by filling vacant posts. The status was as follows. Four posts in the Chinese booth had been filled. Three posts in the English booth were filled, one with an interpreter on assignment from the United Nations Office at Geneva who would be replaced soon. Three posts in the French booth were filled, but a fourth interpreter on assignment from the United Nations Office at Geneva would be returning there in January 2003, leaving that booth without coverage for Russian. Three posts in the Russian booth were filled. In the Spanish booth, two associate interpreters had passed the Spanish-language competitive examination, and would shortly be recruited. The third vacancy would be filled from the roster of successful candidates. In the Arabic booth, one trainee interpreter was awaiting training, one was in the process of recruitment and was due to begin work in late October or early November 2002. A third interpreter would be assigned to Nairobi for two years from November 2002, and a further candidate had submitted a curriculum vitae to the Office of Human Resources Management. The Department could therefore be seen to be making sincere efforts to make the team of interpreters in Nairobi fully operational during 2003.

49. With regard to the programming of meetings, he referred the Committee to paragraph 15 of the report on improving the Department's performance (A/57/289), which stated that the Department would comply strictly with the calendar of conferences and meetings approved by the General Assembly. However, it was also returning to the Member States the prerogative of deciding whether and how to accommodate ad hoc requests for additional meetings beyond those already scheduled, using established mechanisms.

50. **The Chairman** welcomed the efforts of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to serve the Member States better, and the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General to provide comprehensive responses to the questions raised.

51. **Mr. Kramer** (Canada) said that he was encouraged by the direction which the Department was taking, but would like further details on a number of issues. His delegation understood the mandate which

the Member States had given for action to promote global management of conference services, but it wished to know more about the specific tools that would be used to achieve that goal. For example, the Office of Internal Oversight Services had suggested that memorandums of understanding should be concluded between the Department and the Directors-General of the various duty stations and he asked if there were any work planning tools to forecast the availability of personnel and capacity which could be shared throughout the Organization. With regard to translation services, he asked if the Department had considered increasing the pool of potential recruits by reducing its requirements from three languages to two, as one consultants' report had proposed. He also expressed interest in hearing the Under-Secretary-General's views on how best to measure progress in the Department's efforts. His delegation agreed that the workload standards gave a limited insight into productivity. He asked how the Under-Secretary-General would measure productivity and cost-effectiveness, and how it would be possible to develop a better understanding of the progress of improvements over time.

52. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that the attention which delegations had paid to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management was a measure of the importance of its work within the Organization. Her delegation supported the view of the representative of Canada that the Department should use specific benchmarks to promote results-based management and to evaluate the complex range of activities which it undertook. Her first specific question related to the reference to programme budget implications in the report on the Department (A/57/289, para. 15) regarding conference services for the Main Committees and other intergovernmental bodies as opposed to services for the Security Council and plenary meetings of the General Assembly. The report spoke of services being provided in strict compliance with the calendar of conferences and meetings, but her delegation wondered how the Secretariat interpreted the consultants' recommendations that there should be a flexible mechanism for programming conference services which did not tie the hands of the Main Committees and other bodies in the performance of their work. Her delegation also wished to point out that the statistics for interpretation services provided for the regional groups in the biennium 2001-2002 showed that the utilization rate of forecast needs had been high. That was out of step with the situation emerging as a result of the budget restrictions that had been imposed. It might be appropriate for the Department to find better ways of collecting statistics on the provision of interpretation services for the regional groups, as there was a contrast between the situation on the ground and the situation resulting from the adoption of resolutions 56/254 D and 56/287.

53. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation respected the prerogative of the Secretary-General to undertake reform, as the Under-Secretary-General had explained. The Under-Secretary-General had also pointed out that the Fifth Committee could review and revisit the measures taken. However, he would like further details of the mandate given to the administration, in particular, the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, which was bound by what the Member States decided and was responsible for supplying services for conferences and meetings. He wondered why the Department had altered the details of the programme budget instead of adhering to the terms of General Assembly resolution 54/249. He also asked if the *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council* had been translated into all six official languages, as requested in resolution 55/222.

54. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that her delegation generally supported the Department's reform proposals and shared the views which the representative of Canada had just expressed thereon. It welcomed the efforts being made to fill the vacancies that existed at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and looked forward to a report on the progress that had been achieved. It would also welcome additional information on the proposed integration of the functions of the Fifth and Sixth Committee technical-servicing secretariats into the Department. In that connection, her delegation took note of the request contained in the letter dated 18 October 2002 from the Chairman of the Sixth Committee addressed to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee (A/C.5/57/18) and would welcome clarification of the procedural implications of that request.

55. On the question of information technology support for permanent missions, she wished to know whether, in addition to equipment, missions would also be provided with computer accessories, training, and maintenance services. Lastly, she wished to know the

basis on which the number of hard copies to be printed of a particular document would be determined.

56. **Mr. Farid** (Saudi Arabia) said that his delegation would greatly appreciate it if, during the month of Ramadan, the Committee's afternoon meetings could begin at 2 p.m. and end at 5 p.m. to allow members of the Committee who were Muslims to travel home and break their fast.

57. **Mr. Chen** Jian (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management), replying to the further questions and comments of members, said that, as a general principle, the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management was guided by the decisions of the intergovernmental bodies and would continue to be so guided. The Department would report on the progress achieved in the implementation of its reforms in order to facilitate review by Member States and to obtain their understanding and support.

58. On the question of coordination between the different duty stations, such coordination was carried out at several levels. First, annual meetings were held between the four duty stations to exchange ideas and best practices and to set policy guidelines for conference services. At a working level, managers were in contact on a weekly or daily basis, as necessary. Such contacts were particularly useful in the case of conferences away from Headquarters, at which the workload was shared among the various duty stations. He himself maintained personal contacts and discussed general policy issues with the executive directors at the other duty stations. It was proposed to strengthen those mechanisms in order to further improve coordination between all duty stations. While the proposed reforms were being implemented only at Headquarters, all duty stations had been involved in the self-appraisal exercise.

59. As for the suggestion that the Department might wish to consider the recruitment to the translation and interpretation services of candidates who had only two languages, the Department still followed its long-standing practice of requiring candidates to be proficient in two other official languages in addition to their mother tongue. It would, however, look into the possibility of changing that requirement as a means of increasing the in-house capacity of language staff.

60. As far as the expected results of the reforms were concerned, the Department expected to see improvements in the documentation and meetings servicing situation, as well as in the overall quality of services provided to Member States. The Department was working together with the in-house consultants provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services to prepare a comprehensive implementation plan that would include all indicators of achievement in the reform exercise. Standards for measuring the output of the language services should be both quantitative and qualitative. The Department would address that aspect at a later stage.

61. Two organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, had been exempted from the action taken by the Secretary-General in response to the budgetary constraints. However, the subsidiary organs of those two bodies had not been exempted. The Department would continue to service meetings of regional groups, within the limits of available resources. Lastly, the financial implications of the proposals for integrating the functions of the Fifth and Sixth Committee technical servicing secretariats would be set out in the programme budget proposals for the biennium 2004-2005. He would be pleased to provide more detailed information during the informal consultations.

62. **The Chairman** said that the Bureau would consider the request made by the representative of Saudi Arabia for the Committee's meeting hours to be adjusted during the month of Ramadan and he would report back to the Committee.

Agenda item 110: Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.9

63. *Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.9 was adopted.*

Agenda item 111: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Common services (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.14

64. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.14 was adopted.*

Agenda item 111: Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 118: Human resources management (*continued*)

Gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.5

65. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.5 on behalf of the Chairman.

66. *Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.5 was adopted.*

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.8

67. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.8 was adopted.*

Videoconferencing at the United Nations (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.10

68. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.10 was adopted.*

Decentralized budgetary and financial arrangements for central services (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.11

69. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.11 was adopted.*

Delivery of advisory services to Member States (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.12

70. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.12 was adopted.*

Trends in extrabudgetary resources at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the impact on its capacity to carry out the programme of work (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.13

71. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.13 was adopted.*

Agenda item 115: Administrative and budgetary coordination of the United Nations with the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (*continued*)

Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.6

72. *Draft decision A/C.5/57/L.6 was adopted.*

Agenda item 119: Joint Inspection Unit (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.7

73. **Ms. Wahab** (Indonesia) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.7 on behalf of the Chairman.

74. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) expressed the hope that the views which her delegation and others had expressed during the informal discussions on the item would be taken into account when the Joint Inspection Unit finalized the list of topics for its programme of work for 2003 and beyond.

75. *Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.7 was adopted.*

Agenda item 122: Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (*continued*)

Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.4

76. **Mr. Kelapile** (Botswana) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.4 on behalf of the Chairman.

77. *Draft resolution A/C.5/57/L.4 was adopted.*

Organization of work

78. **Mr. Ramos** (Portugal), coordinator of the question of cooperation between headquarters departments and regional commissions under agenda item 112, proposed that the Secretariat should prepare a draft decision on the question, by which the General Assembly would take note of the note of the Secretary-General contained in document A/57/361 and of the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in document A/57/7/Add.3.

79. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.

United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.16

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
27 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 16th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 25 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 114: Improving the financial situation of the United Nations (*continued*)

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-66068 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 114: Improving the financial situation of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/57/498)

1. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, reaffirmed the legal obligation of Member States to bear the expenses of the Organization. However, States that were temporarily unable to meet their financial obligations as a consequence of genuine economic difficulties should be given sympathetic consideration.

2. The Group of 77 and China noted with concern that the expectations that had been created in 2001 that the Organization would finally emerge from the financial crisis of the preceding years had not been realized in 2002, a year that had been marked by a precarious cash flow situation and by a decrease in the number of States that had paid their contributions in full. The recurrent cash flow difficulties that the Organization faced in the second half of each year in its regular budget were due mainly to the late payment of assessed contributions by the major contributor and resulted in cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget. All Member States must pay their contributions in full and on time so that the Organization would have financial resources available to it early in the year. The Secretariat should inform Member States of how it intended to resolve the situation without recourse to cross-borrowing.

3. The Group of 77 and China also noted that the Organization's year-end debt was projected to be $850 million and called upon all Member States that were in arrears, in particular the major contributor, to pay all outstanding contributions as early as possible.

4. An additional cause of concern was the delay in the reimbursement of developing countries that contributed troops and contingent-owned equipment to United Nations peacekeeping operations. All such outstanding amounts, including those dating back several years, should be paid promptly and a solution should be found to the problem caused by the practice of cross-borrowing.

5. The Group of 77 and China had taken due note of the need for additional resources in order to implement the legislative mandates to which the Under-Secretary-General for Management had referred. That element would require comprehensive discussion in the Fifth Committee, but the Group of 77 and China was committed to a careful review of each proposal for additional resources.

6. **Mr. Volkov** (Russian Federation) said that the statistics and assessment given by the Under-Secretary-General for Management had shown that the Organization was no longer in the dire financial situation that had threatened it throughout most of the 1990s. However, while 2001 had been a record year for the payment by Member States of their assessments and for payments to them for troops and contingent-owned equipment, there were no grounds for optimism about the current year because substantial problems remained. The accumulated arrears in assessments remained enormous, at $2.4 billion, including $1.7 billion of debts in respect of peacekeeping operations, and cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget to finance regular-budget activities was increasing. The Organization owed approximately $850 million to Member States which had contributed peacekeeping troops and equipment. At a time when new requirements were being placed on the regular budget and the situation in regions of the world in crisis was making huge demands on the Organization's peacekeeping operations, the financial circumstances were a matter of concern. Financial instability was also complicating the process of reform.

7. The Russian Federation appreciated the efforts that were being made to ensure that the payments expected from Member States, especially the major contributors, were made. It was continuing its efforts to support the Organization, and had made payments of over $102 million in 2001, and over $38 million in 2002, fulfilling the commitment it had made in 1995 to clear its payment arrears for the regular budget and peacekeeping operations within seven years. It wished to reiterate its position that all the Member States, without exception, should demonstrate their political will to fulfil their obligations under the Charter and pay their assessments in order to enable the Organization to function properly and maintain financial stability. Despite the economic crisis it had undergone in 1998, the Russian Federation had done its utmost to meet its obligations. At the same time, it fully understood the position of the world's poorest countries, which were not in a position to pay their assessments. The Under-Secretary-General for Management had estimated that the regular budget would grow by up to $300 million; faced with that rate of increase, it was particularly

important that assessments should be paid in full and on time.

8. **Ms. Løj** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, noted with satisfaction that the Organization's finances had slowly but surely continued to move away from the state of crisis and precariousness of earlier years. As the demands on the United Nations continued to grow, the Secretary-General must have a solid and predictable financial basis on which to carry out mandated activities in a cost-efficient manner.

9. While the overall assessment for 2002 was positive, the European Union had nevertheless taken due note of the words of caution expressed by the Under-Secretary-General for Management concerning the status of contributions, the cash flow situation and the capacity of the regular budget for the biennium 2002-2003. It was a matter of concern that, to date, only 105 countries, compared with 122 in 2001, had paid their assessed regular budget contributions in full. Indeed, the total amount of unpaid assessments was alarmingly high and showed that the Organization's financial stability remained under pressure. All Member States should fulfil their obligations under the Charter and pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

10. The declining number of Member States that had paid their contributions in full had created a worsening cash situation and it might again become necessary to resort to cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget by the end of 2002. It had been noted, however, that the amount available for that purpose would decrease in the future.

11. The European Union was concerned at the slowdown in the scheduled payment of the Organization's debt to Member States that had contributed troops and contingent-owned equipment to peacekeeping operations. Unfortunately, the Secretary-General's stated goal of paying for all current obligations in the year in which they were incurred would not be met. The European Union was also concerned at the disturbingly high number of "add-ons" to the regular budget for the biennium 2002-2003 and would return to that subject in connection with the first performance report and the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2004-2005.

12. **Mr. Akram** (Pakistan) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The financial figures for 2002 showed that, despite the reforms that had been undertaken in 2000, the Organization's financial stability remained uncertain and fragile and chronic financial problems were beginning to surface again after a brief pause in 2001. Both the level of unpaid assessments and the Organization's cash flow position gave cause for concern, particularly since, should current trends continue, the Secretariat would be obliged to cross-borrow from the peacekeeping budget and the debt owed to troop contributors would continue to rise. Such a fragile financial situation had the potential to threaten the solvency and stability of the United Nations and seriously undermine its capacity to implement mandated programmes and activities.

13. For a major troop contributor such as Pakistan, the Organization's financial uncertainties imposed a double burden. The mounting debt to Pakistan was a direct consequence of the practice of cross-borrowing from peacekeeping funds and, with arrears in assessed contributions to the peacekeeping budget at nearly $1.7 billion, further delays in reimbursements to troop contributors were likely. The Secretariat should explore other more equitable and innovative ways of financing its regular budget cash deficits. Should the current trend continue, further cross-borrowing might no longer be feasible in the near future and might even jeopardize the Organization's ability to fulfil its primary role under the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security.

14. Notwithstanding those difficulties, Pakistan would continue its proud tradition of contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security. That commitment, however, should be reciprocated by prompt and full settlement of the debts owed to Pakistan and other troop-contributing countries. It was unfair to place the burden for the reluctance of those that were better placed to pay on those that were manifestly least able to forgo the compensation owed them.

15. In order to ensure the Organization's financial stability, each Member State must demonstrate its

commitment by meeting its financial obligations in full and on time, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the decisions of the General Assembly. In turn, the Secretariat must use the resources made available to it in an efficient and transparent manner and, to that end, programme managers must be made more accountable. The Secretariat should aim not merely at cutting costs but also at optimizing the use of available resources.

16. While the General Assembly did not normally adopt a substantive resolution on the item under consideration, it might be necessary to review that practice if the Organization's financial situation did not improve. A strong message emanating from the General Assembly in the form of a resolution could help to generate the political will required to respond to the Organization's financial uncertainties and difficulties. A United Nations locked in a never-ending financial crisis could be neither effective nor innovative in addressing the complex challenges confronting the world at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

17. **Mr. Kittikhoun** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. While it noted with satisfaction that total contributions from Member States in 2001 was the highest amount ever received in any one year, the Association remained concerned about the practice of cross-borrowing from peacekeeping accounts to finance regular budget expenditures and about the fact that the budget had not kept pace with mandated activities. Reimbursements for troops and contingent-owned equipment should also be speeded up. The high level of unpaid assessments threatened the Organization's ability to implement the programmes and activities mandated by Member States effectively. Only if Member States paid their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions could the Organization achieve the level of funding needed to fulfil the mandates entrusted to it.

18. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was a matter of concern that, after a historic good year for the United Nations with record levels of contributions and payments to Member States, the Organization was once again faced with an insufficient cash balance, mounting unpaid assessments and increased cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping account. The main reason for that state of affairs was the failure of a few Member States to pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions, in fulfilment of their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations.

19. The practice of cross-borrowing was particularly disturbing. The Member States that responded to the call to maintain international peace and security, often under difficult domestic circumstances, were mainly developing countries, on which delays in reimbursement placed additional burdens. As the largest troop contributor, Bangladesh would welcome further details of the specific measures that were envisaged to remedy the situation.

20. His delegation was pleased to learn of the action being taken by the United States of America to pay its arrears to the Organization. Those payments would help to lower the Organization's debt to Member States significantly. It also welcomed the decision of the United States Government to lift the ceiling on its peacekeeping contribution. Such a development was particularly welcome at a time of rising demand for an increase in the Organization's peacekeeping capacity.

21. **Mr. Brar** (India) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The projections of the Organization's year-end financial situation gave cause for concern. The problems that some Member States had in meeting their obligations were understandable and were not the cause of the current situation, which was largely due to the failure of a large number of Member States to fulfil their obligations in full and on time. While his delegation was heartened by the Secretariat's expectation that the arrears owed to the regular budget would be reduced to $298 million by the end of 2002 from the current level of $576 million, the situation with regard to unpaid peacekeeping assessments was most unsatisfactory. Nearly 80 per cent of the peacekeeping arrears was owed by 12 major contributors. At the same time, the largest amounts owed by way of reimbursements to troop contributors were owed to developing countries. Troop contributors had been informed, moreover, that additional payments during the year would be made only if contributions were received. That situation posed an unfair economic burden on developing

countries. The United Nations could not continue to penalize Member States that had not only shown a consistent commitment to peacekeeping by providing troops and equipment but had also been paying their assessed contributions in full and on time.

22. A further cause for concern was the resumption of cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget to finance regular budget expenditures. Such a practice would adversely affect the ability of the Organization to reimburse contributors of troops and contingent-owned equipment. Specific proposals for minimizing cross-borrowing should therefore be presented to the Secretariat with the aim of eventually eliminating it altogether.

23. With regard to the unexpectedly large increase in the budget for the current year, immediate corrective action should be taken to ensure compatibility between approved mandates and the resources available for their implementation.

24. **Mr. Stagno** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the Group noted with concern the deterioration in the Organization's financial situation since the previous year and the shrinking number of Member States that had paid their assessed contributions in full. Payment of assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions was the only way to resolve the Organization's financial crisis and all Member States, especially the main contributor, should therefore fulfil their financial obligations. Member States that were temporarily unable to fulfil their obligations as a consequence of genuine economic difficulties should, however, be given sympathetic consideration.

25. The Rio Group deplored the continuing practice of cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping account to finance regular budget activities. It was a practice that imposed a double financial burden on troop contributors, since, in addition to their assessed contributions, they were forced to bear the burden of the Organization's debt. The majority of troop contributors were developing nations that could use those resources to help meet their basic needs.

26. The Rio Group took note of the need for additional resources to fulfil legislative mandates and was prepared to give careful consideration to each request. With regard to the special political missions under way in the region, the Rio Group wished to underscore its particular interest in the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

27. **Mr. Heinbecker** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Management was a clear reminder to Member States of their critical responsibility to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. The list of Member States that had paid all their assessments in full was depressingly short — only nine — and included both developed and developing countries. The issue was therefore less about resources than about will. Since the contributions of those nine countries accounted for less than 6 per cent of the budget, it was easy to understand the reasons for the Organization's current financial difficulties.

28. The delays in the payment of assessed contributions had particularly harsh implications for troop contributors, many of which were developing countries that had largely fulfilled their obligations. The delegations on whose behalf he spoke were concerned that the good progress achieved by the Secretariat in recent months towards clearing the backlog in reimbursements to Member States would unravel. While borrowing from other accounts had enabled the Organization to continue to operate financially, it was neither efficient nor good fiscal practice. Moreover, those avenues would be less readily available in the future.

29. He hoped that the Organization's financial situation would continue to improve over the next six months as Member States fulfilled their responsibilities and he welcomed the steps that had been taken by the United States of America to reduce its arrears and to lift the cap on its peacekeeping assessment. It was also encouraging to note that the United States of America was considering making regular budget payments at the beginning of the year rather than at the end. Other Member States, particularly the major contributors, should also take steps to address the problem of their late payments and arrears so that the United Nations could return to a more stable and secure financial footing, which was essential for the effective and efficient performance of its mandated tasks.

30. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. In a complex and unstable world, the

international community had high expectations of the United Nations. However, without stable financial foundations, it would be difficult for the Organization to play its proper role. His delegation was very concerned that the amount of unpaid assessments stood at $2.4 billion, and that the single biggest contributor alone owed over $1.3 billion. The failure to pay assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions was undoubtedly the major cause of the Organization's cash flow problems. Most Member States had been making the same appeal for assessments to be paid every year in the Fifth Committee, unfortunately to no avail. It was encouraging that some payments were expected over the next three months. He hoped that those contributions would indeed be forthcoming, since they would go some way towards alleviating the current difficulties.

31. **Mr. Stoffer** (United States of America), welcoming the reforms that had been undertaken to improve management, security and the efficient use of resources, said that the financial situation was far healthier than it had been a few years earlier. His country was working hard to meet its financial obligations. By the end of October, it would have paid $255 million, or approximately 90 per cent of its assessed contribution to the regular budget for 2002, with the remainder to be paid as soon as Congress approved the annual budget. By the same date, it would have paid almost $285 million in peacekeeping assessments, including amounts for the international tribunals, and, by early 2003, it would be ready to pay out a further $227 million. It would shortly release funds amounting to almost $250 million to cover the payment of peacekeeping arrears, in addition to a recent payment it had made of $70 million as a result of the lifting of the cap on its assessment rate. Thus, his country was ready to complete an important chapter in its relations with the United Nations.

32. Nevertheless, his delegation remained concerned by the need for further reform of the Organization. Mandates must be kept in close alignment with the resources contributed by Member States, and programme managers must identify obsolete and ineffective activities immediately in order to release funds for higher priorities. Over the coming weeks, concerted efforts were needed to pursue two important initiatives: one aimed at the revitalization of the Headquarters buildings, and the other focusing on the maintenance of the operational relevance of the Organization.

33. **Ms. Merchant** (Norway) said that the decline in the real value of the United Nations budget over recent years had been accompanied by increasing reliance on extrabudgetary funding for priority activities. That was not a cost-effective way to address global issues and undermined the principle of collective responsibility for common concerns. All Member States should accept full responsibility for providing the Organization with the necessary resources to carry out its mandates. Her delegation was alarmed at the rising levels of unpaid assessed contributions and supported all measures designed to encourage their timely, full and unconditional payment.

34. **Mr. Ivanou** (Belarus) said that, while the financial situation of the United Nations had improved somewhat in recent years, it remained far from ideal. The elimination of the regular budget cash deficit at year's end was a significant achievement. However, the regrettable practice of cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget in order to finance expenditure under the regular budget had continued. Consequently, it would not be possible to achieve, in the near future, the goal of making payments to Member States for troops and contingent-owned equipment in the same year that the troops and equipment were contributed.

35. In his statement at the Committee's 12th meeting, the Under-Secretary-General for Management had rightly emphasized the issue of the adequacy of the Organization's budgets to fund all of the mandates approved by Member States. In that connection, his delegation agreed that the implementation of additional reforms should not be a pretext for another round of budget cuts. As to the proposed $305 million increase in the level of the budget, the Committee should revert to the issue in 2003 in the context of the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

36. The belated and irregular payment of assessed contributions and the arrears accumulated by Member States were among the main causes of the Organization's current financial difficulties. He noted, in that connection, that the bulk of the arrears was owed by only a few States. The problem lay not so much in a lack of political will on the part of individual Governments as in the imperfections of the existing scale of assessments, which did not fully reflect

Member States' capacity to pay. His delegation believed that revising the scale of assessments so that it took full account of capacity to pay, strengthening internal financial discipline, and rationalizing the use of existing resources were the keys to improving the financial situation of the United Nations.

37. In recent years, Belarus had regularly been among the first countries to pay its regular budget contributions in full, reflecting its commitment to the strengthening of the Organization. In that connection, he appealed to all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations on time and without conditions.

38. **Ms. Udo** (Nigeria) said that her delegation associated itself with the comments made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Despite the progress made in 2001, it was clear that the Organization would once again experience a deficit cash balance by the end of 2002. In response to cash flow difficulties, the Secretariat continued to resort to cross-borrowing from peacekeeping funds, at the expense of Member States which were owed money for troops and contingent-owned equipment. By the end of the year, the debts built up towards those States would have reached $850 million. Member States were called upon to pay their assessments in full, on time and without conditions, and the United Nations should do likewise and make concerted efforts to pay the amounts owed to States for troops and contingent-owned equipment. An alternative to the practice of cross-borrowing must be found as a matter of urgency. Member States should honour their commitments and meet their respective financial obligations.

39. **Mr. Ha** Chan-ho (Republic of Korea) shared the concerns that had been expressed regarding unpaid assessments and cross-borrowing. However, Member States that had genuine difficulties in meeting their financial obligations should be encouraged by the fact that overall assessment levels for peacekeeping had declined from a peak of $3 billion in 2001 to below $2.1 billion in 2002. In contrast, the budgets of the international tribunals had risen continuously since their inception, and that trend was unlikely to be reversed. He expressed concern over the lack of an explicit completion strategy for the work of the tribunals. He urged the United Nations to use the expected payment of arrears by the largest single contributor to reimburse Member States immediately for the amounts owed for troops and contingent-owned equipment. Further efforts must be made to enhance the efficiency of the Organization. The fact that the overall level of the budget had not increased for several years did not necessarily justify a substantial increase for the next biennium. Each programme and activity should be assessed on its merits, in terms of resource requirements and effectiveness in reaching stated objectives. Lastly, his delegation was prepared to discuss alternatives to the current system of including special political missions within the framework of the regular budgetary procedures.

40. **Mr. Yamazaki** (Japan) said that, in addition to the criteria for assessing the financial health of the Organization referred to by the Under-Secretary-General for Management, it was important to consider the relationship between the level of the budget and the ability of Member States to pay. In that regard, the number of countries paying assessed contributions in full and on time had decreased over the past two years. Two other factors would make it more difficult to improve the financial situation of the United Nations, namely an unfavourable exchange rate and a shortage of peacekeeping cash to use for cross-borrowing. He pointed out that only through the full payment by Japan of its regular budget contributions earlier than in previous years had a cash deficit been resolved earlier in the year. While his delegation welcomed the efforts made by the United States to pay its outstanding contributions, it looked forward to further efforts in that regard. He expressed concern that a steep increase of over $300 million was predicted for the regular budget in the biennium 2002-2003, despite evidence that Member States were having difficulty in meeting their existing commitments.

41. **Mr. Anderegg** (Switzerland) said that the total amount of outstanding contributions to the budget had reached $2.4 billion by 30 September 2002; that represented a substantial loss to the majority of Member States, especially those contributing troops and contingent-owned equipment, in terms of potential interest. His delegation was especially concerned about the non-payment of assessments for the international tribunals. He drew attention to a number of inconsistencies in the figures given in the reports concerning peacekeeping finances. While he appreciated the inherent difficulty in planning the financing for such operations, he believed that further improvements could be made.

42. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Member States had an obligation to pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. Some countries, however, were unable to fulfil that obligation because of genuine economic difficulties, and she urged that they be treated with understanding. While the financial situation of the United Nations had improved in recent years, it was imperative to ensure that the Organization was provided with sufficient resources to fund all the mandates approved by Member States. Her delegation remained concerned about the practice of cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget in order to finance expenditure under the regular budget, which, in turn, hampered the Organization's ability to pay Member States for troops and contingent-owned equipment. Noting that the majority of the 24 Member States to which the United Nations owed the bulk of that debt were developing countries and African countries, she called on the Secretariat to avoid adopting short-term solutions that could adversely affect those Member States in both the immediate and the long terms. Lastly, she assured the Committee of South Africa's commitment to pay its assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions.

43. **Mr. Connor** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), responding to a point raised by the representative of Venezuela speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that 2002 was forecast to be a good year not on the basis of what had taken place, but in the light of what was expected to occur. The substantial and very welcome commitments made by the United States Government with respect to cash flow would enable the Organization to make additional payments for troops and contingent-owned equipment by year end. Further commitments made by the major contributor would help to improve the long-term financial situation. First, the Government of the United States had pledged to re-synchronize its regular budget payments; that would eliminate the need for cross-borrowing from the peacekeeping budget. Second, the United States was to lift the cap of 25 per cent on its peacekeeping contributions for the years 2001 to 2004. The cap, which was mandated by national legislation, was expected to be in the range of 27 to 28 per cent. Third, the Government of the United States had promised to make further efforts to clear old arrears.

44. **Mr. Chaudhry** (Pakistan) said that, in addition to the $199 million available in the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund, cash in closed missions totalled $406 million, an amount which surely exceeded the Organization's likely cross-borrowing needs. He asked whether a portion of the closed mission cash could be used to pay Member States for troops and contingent-owned equipment.

45. **Mr. Connor** (Under-Secretary-General for Management) said that the Administration feared the absence of closed mission cash. Indeed, some of the $406 million currently available was already earmarked to finance certain items. Commitments had, however, been made in respect of payments for troops and equipment.

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (A/57/7/Add.4 and A/57/285)

46. **Mr. Niwa** (Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the capital master plan (A/57/285), said that that document had taken as its starting point the guidance and recommendations contained in the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) of 8 December 2000 (A/55/675) and in General Assembly resolution 55/238. He recalled that the Assembly had authorized the Secretary-General to proceed with the preparation of a comprehensive design plan and detailed cost analysis for the capital master plan, identifying all viable alternatives and including measures designed to protect the Organization from cost overruns. The Secretariat had developed a series of alternatives, with the assistance of a team of architectural and engineering firms, and those alternatives had been organized into the options and approaches proposed in the report.

47. Member States would have to decide between the adoption of a reactive approach, involving continuous ad hoc repairs, or a planned refurbishment programme, the capital master plan. In the Secretary-General's judgement, the Organization could not ignore the life-threatening hazards to which delegates and staff were increasingly being exposed. Ad hoc repairs would not bring significant improvements although the cost to Member States would be substantial. The Advisory Committee had concluded in its recent report on the

matter (A/57/7/Add.4, para. 4) that there was no choice but to proceed with the implementation of the capital master plan. He was therefore presenting that option to the Fifth Committee as the preferred approach of the Secretary-General.

48. Should Member States choose the capital master plan, they would then have to decide whether to proceed on the basis of the baseline scope or to approve the additional scope options. The baseline would fully satisfy current codes and standards and would constitute a complete response to existing refurbishment needs. The scope options, however, would allow the Organization to address future needs and to practice what it preached through the pursuit of sustainable development and the introduction of green technologies. The Administration therefore agreed with the Advisory Committee that proceeding with the scope options was the right decision for the long term.

49. It had been assumed that, owing to the lack of the necessary swing space for relocation out of the Headquarters complex, the planned refurbishment would have to be carried out in an incremental manner — the so-called second approach outlined in paragraphs 43 to 47 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285). However, in July 2002, the City of New York had proposed the construction, through the United Nations Development Corporation (UNDC), of a building that could be utilized as swing space on the east side of First Avenue between 41st and 42nd Streets, on the current site of the Robert Moses playground. That proposal would enable the Administration to adopt the so-called first approach to the implementation of the capital master plan (A/57/285, paras. 40-42). It also addressed one of the major concerns voiced by Member States, namely, that cooperation should be extended by the host city, and it was indicative of the personal commitment of Mayor Michael Bloomberg to make the United Nations feel comfortable in New York. In New York State, in order to obtain legislative approval for the demapping of a park, it was necessary to provide compensating equivalent space in the same vicinity. Accordingly, the Secretary-General was proposing that a walkway/bikeway should be constructed along the East River, spanning the length of the Headquarters complex, as mitigation for the loss of the playground site and that the related costs should be absorbed by the United Nations.

50. The City of New York would have to overcome many obstacles in a very short space of time in order to make its proposal a reality. It therefore needed to receive a strong signal from the General Assembly during the main part of the current session that the United Nations wanted and needed the new building, that it was prepared to mitigate the loss of the playground and that it intended to proceed with the capital master plan as a matter of urgency, subject to the approval of a funding mechanism in 2003.

51. The United Nations Development Corporation hoped to secure the necessary approvals for the new building by the end of 2003. If a funding commitment was received from the United Nations, construction would take place in 2004 and 2005. In late 2004, the first phase of the capital master plan, involving the refurbishment of site infrastructure and the basements in the Headquarters complex, would begin. In late 2005, all meetings and most office-type functions would be relocated to the new building. Refurbishment of the Headquarters building would be undertaken from 2006 to 2009. In late 2009, implementation of the capital master plan would be complete. The new building would then be vacated, and delegates and staff would return to the Headquarters building. Most or all of the temporary meeting rooms in the new building would be converted to office space, and staff currently located in the DC-1 and DC-2 buildings and in commercially leased space would move into the new building.

52. As a public benefit corporation of the State of New York formed to support the needs of the United Nations, UNDC was able to issue bonds in order to raise funds for the construction of buildings for the Organization. The cost of leasing the new building from UNDC during the swing space period was estimated at $96 million. However, the availability of swing space would reduce the baseline refurbishment cost by approximately $103 million. While there would be leasing costs after the completion of the capital master plan, they would likely be lower than the cost of renting commercially leased space at market rates. Moreover, the Administration was now proposing a lease-purchase agreement. The cost of such an arrangement would depend on the interest rate and duration of the bonds issued by UNDC for construction of the building. Thus, if the United Nations were to purchase the building in 2010, the cost would be approximately $316 million, plus annual lease costs for

the 900,000 square foot building of close to $25 million; in 2016, the cost would be $271 million and if the building was purchased at the end of the bond period, perhaps in 2036, there would be no added cost as the lease payments over the years would have paid the bonds in full. If, on the other hand, the Organization were to buy the building immediately on its completion in late 2005, the cost would be around $335 million, plus the cost of converting temporary meeting rooms to office space, estimated at between $15 and $25 million.

53. Decisions regarding the management of the capital master plan had been based on industry best practices. The management structure would consist of three main components: the United Nations capital master plan programme management group, the architectural and engineering team, and the construction management team. Their respective functions were described in section V of the report. It would be important to have sufficient personnel to ensure the smooth running of the project. Staffing requirements, however, would change over time, and it would be necessary to recruit specialists or outsource certain functions. Maximum flexibility should be given to the project management team to secure completion of the capital master plan on time, within budget and within the quality parameters.

54. Concerning financing, the preferred option was an interest-free loan to be repaid over time through additional assessed contributions. The Secretary-General had intended to establish a financial advisory board to raise funds for the project. However, in the light of the proposal by the City of New York, he had decided to broaden the terms of reference of the advisory board to encompass other areas in which he might need advice. The board would now focus on issues related to the new building, including architectural integrity and harmony and the linkage with the visitors' experience project, as well as on resource mobilization for in-kind and cash contributions.

55. The Secretary-General believed that, since the United Nations was an international organization, financing for the refurbishment should come primarily from Member States, without prejudice to any possible additional contributions from the private sector. It was vital, however, that the continued development of the project should not be made hostage to a final decision on funding. If an agreement was reached, in principle, on the phasing and scope options, it would be very costly to set the project aside until a consensus was reached on the financial modalities.

56. A series of decisions was required from the General Assembly: a decision to undertake a planned refurbishment, rather than to adopt a reactive approach; a decision on the scope of the capital master plan and what options to include, which would determine the estimated total cost of the project; a decision on the phasing of the work, including a decision as to whether to accept the proposal of the City of New York; a decision to authorize the funds needed to continue the detailed design work in 2003 and 2004; and a decision to reach agreement on the funding for the actual refurbishment work as soon as possible in 2003, so that a lease agreement could be signed with UNDC in October 2003 and funds could be available for the start of refurbishment in late 2004.

57. He was convinced that the proposals he had outlined represented the most cost-effective way of providing the Organization with a safer and more secure Headquarters.

58. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the capital master plan (A/57/7/Add.4), said that the Secretary-General had estimated the cost of the reactive approach to the maintenance of the Headquarters complex to be $2,088 million over 25 years. The capital master plan would cost just under $1,300 million on the basis of the assumptions contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285). That cost would increase at a rate of $35 million to $40 million per year. The Advisory Committee therefore agreed with the Secretary-General that the capital master plan was the most cost-effective choice available to the Member States. Firstly, it recommended that the General Assembly should during the current session approve the baseline scope with the scope options (A/57/7/Add.4, paras. 8 and 9). Secondly, in order to minimize cost escalation and other risks, it recommended that the capital master plan should be implemented by means of the first approach suggested by the Secretary-General, namely, vacating most of the Headquarters complex. More observations on that subject could be found in paragraphs 10 to 21 of the Advisory Committee's report; in recommending that option, ACABQ recognized the importance of the goodwill of the host city, and urged the Secretary-

General to work with it to minimize the financial impact of any delay.

59. The comments of the Advisory Committee on the management and financing of the project could be found in paragraphs 22 to 30 of its report. The cost of the plan option approved by the General Assembly would have to be further clarified when the Secretary-General submitted firm cost estimates as part of the proposals for financing agreed with the Member States. In considering financing options, the Advisory Committee wished to point out that commercial borrowing had not been the practice of the Organization in the past. As indicated in paragraph 25 of the report of the Advisory Committee, the financing arrangements should be developed as soon as possible after the negotiations with the host authorities were completed and the projected final cost was accurately known, and should then be reported to the General Assembly for its approval. The Advisory Committee further recommended that a special account should be set up, and that $44.5 million should be appropriated for it, as indicated in paragraph 24 of its report. It called for the full application of the relevant financial and staff regulations and rules and the rules and procedures concerning procurement and contracting of staff, and stressed the importance of oversight by the Internal Audit Service of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and by the Board of Auditors.

60. In paragraph 30 of its report, the Advisory Committee welcomed the offer of support from the City of New York in the implementation of the capital master plan. The General Assembly might wish to encourage further cooperation with the relevant host country authorities at each stage of the development and implementation of the plan, on matters including the financing options.

61. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, pledged support for the proposed refurbishment of the United Nations complex through the capital master plan. The buildings were in dire need of renovation, and the plans would make a tangible and lasting contribution to the efforts to strengthen the Organization. The report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285) demonstrated that regular maintenance of the complex would not be able to keep up with the anticipated wear and tear of the building infrastructure and that the cost of such an approach would be higher than the cost of a complete renovation.

62. While the European Union supported the main elements of the capital master plan, it would like further details regarding design plans and other matters, including the location of new conference rooms; the proposed level of security protection of the complex and its relation to already initiated security arrangements; the impact on parking arrangements and other basic infrastructure; the prevention of cost overruns and delays; and legal aspects of construction management. Moreover, it would appreciate a firm commitment from the host city that it would provide a swing space site for the consolidation of office space between 41st and 42nd Streets.

63. It was essential to reach a common understanding during the current session concerning the overall financing of the capital master plan, in particular host country financing. He noted that the total cost of the baseline scope of the plan was slightly higher than the proposal put forward in 2000. The additional scope options presented by the Secretary-General required further consideration. Voluntary contributions from public and private sources could be an important source of additional funding. The European Union was of the view that the host country should bear a substantial proportion of the full cost of the project.

64. The Committee should consider the capital master plan in two stages. During the first stage, it should concentrate on the design, construction, swing space, management and other practical aspects of the Secretary-General's proposal. At a later stage, it should turn its attention to the financial aspects.

65. **Mr. Effah-Apenteng** (Ghana) said his delegation believed that the structural deficiencies listed in the earlier report of the Secretary-General on the capital master plan (A/55/117 and Add.1) had made a compelling case for the major refurbishment of the United Nations Headquarters complex. It had been built over 51 years earlier, and his delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation that the General Assembly should take note of the hazards of the current condition of the building. It also shared the Secretary-General's assessment that the reactive approach was not a sustainable basis for maintaining the Headquarters complex, and accordingly it

supported the proposal for a long-term capital master plan which would take approximately six years to complete. Because any delay in implementing the plan would result in an escalation in cost of about 3.5 per cent per year, the General Assembly should agree to the baseline scope described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285). It was unfortunate that, because of a potential conflict of interest, the United Nations Board of Auditors had been unable to examine the documents on the capital master plan and provide assurances that the assumptions underlying the estimates for the various options they contained were sound. The role of the Board of Auditors should have been viewed not so much as an advisory one, but as akin to due diligence. It was worth considering an intergovernmental mandate to allow it to provide the desired assurances.

66. The proposed provisions for preventing cost overruns did not seem guaranteed to yield results. If overruns occurred, they should be immediately reported so that corrective action could be taken, rather than reported as an appendage when the project was near completion, when it would be too late to take corrective action. While the Secretary-General should give the programme management group the necessary flexibility of authority, strong oversight and accountability should be maintained throughout. His delegation concurred with the views on oversight requirements expressed by the Advisory Committee in paragraph 28 of its report.

67. His delegation hoped that the financing option referred to in paragraph 65 of the report of the Secretary-General would be possible. Cost-effectiveness could best be assured by obtaining financing on an interest-free basis, if necessary from all Member States, without prejudice to funds that could be raised by the Secretary-General by other means.

68. **Mr. Kennedy** (United States of America) said that, while the United Nations Secretariat building had stood the test of time, it only appeared in good repair from a distance. The service life of much of its infrastructure had long expired, and there was a growing risk of catastrophic equipment failure. Rapid action was needed.

69. There were also sound fiscal reasons for acting rapidly. Even a one-year delay in authorizing funds for the proposed project would drive up the estimated cost of $1.1 billion by 3 to 4 per cent. Those extra costs would never be recovered; the funds should be committed immediately and applied to the renovation rather than being lost to inflation.

70. The City and State of New York, the local community and the Government of the United States were mobilizing behind the project, and the Government was examining its financing requirements. However, a tangible plan was needed. The project was an international, not a United States project, and it needed an unambiguous mandate from the Member States to maintain its momentum. He appealed to the Member States to approve the first approach — vacating the Headquarters complex and conducting a refurbishment programme via a swing space facility — as the only solution which would result in the lowest cost, the most efficient project management and the least disruption to the activities of the Organization.

71. **Mr. Brar** (India) said that his delegation wished to see a decision on the capital master plan during the current session of the General Assembly, subject to any proposed financing package being acceptable. That view was based on the fact that a delay in implementation of the project would result in an escalation of 3.5 per cent per year in the cost of the project and an increase in the expenditure on emergency repairs, construction and energy for the Headquarters building if the reactive approach was adopted.

72. The options of lease purchase and outright purchase of the UNDC building to be used as swing space were being examined; the Secretariat should seek precise information from the City authorities regarding the costs involved in each of those options to help the Member States to come to a decision, taking into account the long-term needs of the Organization.

73. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285, para. 41), once it was no longer needed as swing space, the proposed UNDC building would have enough capacity to accommodate United Nations staff currently in the UNDC-1 and UNDC-2 buildings and in commercially leased office space elsewhere. For that reason, a cost-benefit analysis should be performed in consultation with the offices of United Nations funds and programmes located in those buildings.

74. The refurbishment programme was extensive and was projected to cost three times more than the cost of constructing the swing space. The report of the

Secretary-General provided no detailed breakdown of the individual segments of that programme, although the involvement of architects and engineers should make that possible. The Member States would have a clearer view of the complex refurbishment programme if they knew the specific costs forecast by the design team.

75. The Secretariat should provide additional information on the time-frame for the refurbishment programme. Given the experience available, it should be possible to further compress the six-year plan, in order to avoid any cost overruns resulting from delays in implementation. The project management group should be responsible for oversight and accountability with the same purpose in mind. That oversight and accountability should be exercised particularly closely over the considerable number of temporary specialist staff employed on the project.

76. **Mr. Foo Kok Jwee** (Singapore) said that consideration of the capital master plan coincided with a process of reform within the United Nations. While it was important to enhance the capabilities of the Organization and its staff, the physical environment should not be neglected.

77. The earlier report of the Secretary-General on the capital master plan (A/55/117) had emphasized that the United Nations complex did not comply with current safety, fire and building codes, that it had a high concentration of asbestos and that it lacked an effective fire-sprinkler system. The occupants of the building would have a lower chance of survival during a fire and consumed more energy at a higher cost and had more accessibility problems than in any comparable modern building in New York or any other major city. Repeated maintenance operations were not a viable solution. Moreover, the complex had been built for a much smaller number of Member States and a much smaller calendar of meetings. His delegation supported the implementation of the capital master plan in order to upgrade the facilities of the complex to cope with future needs.

78. The merits of the capital master plan were obvious to all, but its financing remained a dilemma. On the one hand, some Member States were reluctant to endorse it without clear financing options. On the other hand, the Secretariat would find it difficult to secure financing without a clear mandate from Member States on the exact scope of the plan. Delays in approving the plan would, however, allow the building to deteriorate further, increasing remedial costs and increasing the cost of the plan itself with every successive year.

79. The option of obtaining an interest-free loan, the procedure that had been used for the original Secretariat building project, deserved serious consideration and further collaboration with the host Government should be explored. However, all feasible cost-effective financing options should be investigated. Host Governments had played a major role in the financing and upkeep of United Nations facilities in other parts of the world. In the case of New York, which derived considerable economic and cultural advantages from the presence of the United Nations, an in-principle pledge of an interest-free loan from the host Government would help to allay the concerns of the Member States as to how the capital master plan was to be funded. His delegation agreed with the recommendation of ACABQ that the relevant United Nations financial regulations and rules, and procurement and contractual rules and procedures should be strictly applied at all stages of the capital master plan project. The Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors should be given the appropriate resources to exercise effective oversight over the plan and the General Assembly should receive detailed periodic progress reports. The Committee should not consider only the financial implications of the plan; it should remember that the lives, safety and welfare of those working at the United Nations would be affected by its decision.

80. **Ms. Santos-Neves** (Brazil) said that her delegation shared the view of the Secretary-General that the Organization had no choice but to proceed with the capital master plan, as the reactive approach to the problems was economically unviable. However, the cost of the plan was high, and not all Member States had the same capacity to make additional contributions from their national budgets.

81. Many host countries in the developed world had provided facilities for the United Nations, and the host country's willingness to do the same for the Organization's Headquarters was important. Her delegation looked forward to hearing its views on that matter. There were, however, complementary sources of financing which the report of the Secretary-General could have explored in greater detail. Her delegation was not convinced that only the more visible parts of

the renovation would be of interest to private-sector contributors, as seemed to be indicated in paragraph 68 of the report.

82. As for the physical facilities of the building, conference rooms should be treated as regular working spaces and some thought should be given to providing adequate sources of daylight in those rooms.

83. With regard to the action to be taken by the General Assembly, the provision of funds which the Secretary-General recommended should be included in future budgets, for the project design work should only be made if that work would be of use regardless of the outcome of negotiations on the capital master plan itself. The baseline scope should be approved, but actual expenditure should be cleared only when a consensus had emerged on the financial provisions for the entire capital master plan. Her delegation also considered it premature to approve all the scope options, including those relating to additional security and redundant building systems, before the method of financing of the baseline scope was clear.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.17

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
29 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 17th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 28 October 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (*continued*)

Agenda item 118: Human resources management

Human resources management reform

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management

Composition of the Secretariat

Amendments to the Staff Rules

Consultants and individual contractors

Employment of retired former staff

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-66282 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (continued) (A/57/7/Add.4 and A/57/285)

1. **Mr. Dutton** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the need to refurbish and modernize the Headquarters complex was clear. For as long as it remained in its current state, the building was an asset of declining value and spiralling maintenance costs. Nevertheless, in view of the complexity of such an undertaking, he would appreciate further details concerning requirements for meeting rooms and information technology infrastructure, as well as safety and security guarantees. The first approach to phasing and swing space described in the report of the Secretary-General seemed to be more convenient than the second approach; it would also provide a better end result. However, since the second approach offered a viable alternative, he would be interested to hear the views of other delegations.

2. The General Assembly should decide during the current session to proceed with the capital master plan, thereby demonstrating its commitment to the project. The Committee should choose one of the options before it and approve the $22.5 million needed in 2003 for the preparation of detailed designs. At the fifty-eighth session, the Committee should consider the progress that had been made and it should consider developments on an annual basis thereafter, with the help of constant oversight by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Board of Auditors. Since a decision would be required on financing at the fifty-eighth session, it would be useful to receive proposals from the host Government in advance of that session. An interest-free loan would be the most appropriate method of financing, although there were also possibilities for encouraging donations from Member States and the global private sector. It would be an appropriate recognition of the considerable economic benefits that the United Nations brought to New York if the host Government were to offer to grant such a loan.

3. **Mr. Zhang** Yishan (China) said that finalizing the capital master plan was only the first step in the process. The key to its implementation was the availability and use of resources. However well-designed it was, it would remain merely a strategy until resources for it were found. His delegation favoured the solution used 50 years earlier for the original construction of the Secretariat building: interest-free loans.

4. The United Nations Headquarters complex had become part of the fabric of New York City, and both the Organization and the city had drawn advantage from their relationship. His delegation hoped and expected that the host country would continue to provide material and moral support for the capital master plan. A clear pledge from the host Government regarding its financing would greatly facilitate the final decision of the Member States. His delegation believed that when honour and expectation beckoned, the host country and New York City would not forget their duties and responsibilities.

5. **Mr. Manczyk** (Poland) said that his delegation aligned itself with the comments made on behalf of the European Union and associated countries. It fully supported the proposal for an extensive refurbishment of the United Nations Headquarters, since the complex did not conform to current fire, safety and security standards. Given the high cost of reactive maintenance, the capital master plan was the most viable option. However, he asked for a firmer commitment from the host city with regard to the construction of a new building to be used as swing space. While he endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) concerning the first approach to phasing, further information on the prevention of cost overruns should be provided during informal consultations to reassure Member States that resources would be used efficiently. Established financial regulations and procedures should be applied strictly to every stage of the capital master plan, with the involvement of OIOS and Board of Auditors throughout.

6. **Mr. Musambachime** (Zambia) said that with a complete overhaul of the United Nations Headquarters complex unavoidable, the methods of achieving that overhaul without disrupting the activities of the Organization should be examined and the financial implications of the project considered. While vacating the building while the work was in progress would reduce costs and shorten the duration of the work, it would hamper the smooth operation of meetings. It was

not possible for the Organization to suspend its activities, so a balance needed to be struck between the need to reduce costs and the need to minimize disruption.

7. The success of the capital master plan would be determined by the arrangements made to finance it. A unique form of cooperation between New York City, New York State, the host Government and the Member States had made it possible to construct the Headquarters complex over 50 years earlier. His delegation hoped that the same kind of cooperation would be possible for the refurbishing of the complex. However, it believed that the list of potential donors of funds should include private companies, non-governmental organizations, foundations and private citizens of the world. Commercial borrowing should be a last resort, used only if there was a shortfall in donations. He urged the Committee to approve the proposed plan to enable the Secretariat to prepare a financing arrangement for consideration by the General Assembly.

Agenda item 118: Human resources management

Human resources management reform (A/57/293 and A/57/469)

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (A/57/276 and A/57/469)

Composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414; A/C.5/56/L.7)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (A/57/126)

Consultants and individual contractors (A/57/310 and A/57/469)

Employment of retired former staff (A/57/413 and A/57/469)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956 and Add.1)

8. **Ms. Salim** (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on human resources management reform (A/57/293), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/258 and General Assembly decision 56/462, said that the Office of Human Resources Management was proud of the progress it had made in reforming the management of human resources in the global Secretariat. That reform would continue. The Secretary-General invited the General Assembly to take note of the account of the progress achieved and the action envisaged in the future. The time had come to consolidate and institutionalize the changes already made, and to make further improvements to bring human resources policy into line with operational needs and worldwide standards of good practice.

9. She drew the attention of the Committee to the cross-cutting issues described in section IV of the report: geographical representation, unplanned vacancies, rejuvenation and young professional staff, mobility, and accountability, responsibility, monitoring and control mechanisms.

10. An important development had taken place after the report had been completed. Consultations during the twenty-sixth session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee from 26 September to 2 October 2002 had led to the adoption of consensus recommendations for presentation to the Secretary-General. Those recommendations would enable the Secretary-General to put forward the definitive proposals on new contractual arrangements requested by the General Assembly in resolution 55/258, for consideration in 2003.

11. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (A/57/276), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/258, she said that monitoring was critical for compliance and sanctions and for providing timely assistance, advice, guidance and support. The Office looked forward to the endorsement by the General Assembly of the approach outlined in the report, which would give it comprehensive monitoring capacity.

12. As required by Staff Regulation 12.3, the report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the Staff Rules (A/57/126) contained the full text of new rules and amendments to existing rules which the Secretary-General intended to implement as from 1 January 2003. It also explained the grounds for those new or amended provisions. The Secretary-General recommended that the General Assembly should take note of them.

13. As requested in General Assembly resolution 55/258, the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414) analysed the ramifications of changing the relative weight of the population factor in the calculation of desirable ranges for the implementation of posts. The analysis showed that the midpoints of the majority of Member States would be only marginally influenced by the changes. An increase in the population factor of 1 or 2 per cent would be to the advantage of eight Member States with a population of over 200 million, and to the detriment of eight Member States which were major contributors to the regular budget of the United Nations.

14. The report of the Secretary-General on consultants and individual contractors (A/57/310), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/221, indicated progress in recruiting from a larger number of countries: 156 countries in the case of consultants and 116 countries in the case of individual contractors.

15. The report of the Secretary-General on the employment of retired former staff (A/57/413), submitted pursuant to General Assembly decision 51/408, showed that the number of engagements of retired former staff members in the biennium 2000-2001 had increased by 3.4 per cent compared to the biennium 1998-1999. Approximately 44 per cent of the engagements were in the Professional and higher categories, about 27 per cent were in the Field Service, General Service and related categories, and about 28 per cent were by special service agreement. Action by the General Assembly was required to allow an adjustment to the permissible earnings for retired freelance language staff, to allow for 125 workdays per year.

16. Over the years, the Office of Human Resources Management had been guided by the Committee in the development of new initiatives and it would continue to follow its guidance. Many of the initiatives described in the report on human resources management reform had broken new ground. One example was the new staff selection system introduced on 1 May 2002. It reflected the principles of merit, transparency and accountability, all issues of concern to the Member States, staff and managers. It was supported by an automated system, Galaxy, and an intensive communication and learning programme. Technology, learning and communication would continue to be included in future initiatives for change, and lessons would be drawn from recent experience. The goal was to bring about a culture of results, high performance, managerial excellence and continuous learning.

17. **Mr. Nair** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/258, said that the objectives of the inspection by OIOS had been to determine whether there was evidence of discrimination based on regional grouping, gender or language in recruitment, placement or promotion, whether the rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the Organization were effective in preventing such discrimination, and whether the Organization's methods of investigating allegations of discrimination were effective and transparent.

18. The inspection had collected data covering the period from 1996 to 2001. It had found no systematic or consistent impairment of equal opportunity for particular regional groups. Gains towards achieving gender parity had been slow, and action was needed to recruit and promote women, especially in the higher grades, and to counteract the rising separation rate for women. The data available had not made it possible to make a constructive analysis of potential discrimination on the grounds of language.

19. Current mechanisms for handling complaints needed to be strengthened. The Office of Internal Oversight Services had noted that in April 2002 the Secretary-General had appointed an Ombudsman to facilitate conflict resolution. The Office favoured seeking to resolve disputes early, as that improved the morale of the staff and minimized cost.

20. The Office of Human Resources Management was leading a process of reform of the recruitment, placement and promotion system. The new method of staff selection should address some of the problems identified in the previous system. Success depended on managers' accountability for their decisions, and on strict monitoring of the implementation of the system.

21. The Secretary-General had agreed with the recommendations in the report, including the need to establish a policy on discrimination, and had confirmed his commitment to ensuring that discrimination was not

tolerated and that any allegations of discrimination were promptly addressed.

22. **Mr. Ouedraogo** (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956/Add.1), drew attention to translation errors in paragraphs 1 and 5 of the French version of the document, which were no doubt due to excessive reliance on self-revision. The Unit had limited its comments to discrimination due to race and language.

23. On the issue of discrimination due to race, the Assembly was clearly concerned about the possibility that such discrimination might exist. In section V, paragraph 3, of its resolution 53/221, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General, as a matter of priority, to ascertain whether racial discrimination existed in recruitment. The fact that the race of its staff members was not kept on record had been found by the Secretariat to have been a major impediment in conducting the exercise. The Unit encouraged the Secretariat to take fuller advantage of the experiences of the World Bank in that area. Exit interviews conducted by the Office of Human Resources Management for staff resigning from the Organization might also serve as a channel to check whether any form of discrimination had been among the reasons for quitting.

24. There were certain difficulties in defining discrimination due to language, mainly stemming from the lack of information. Of 14,905 staff members' files in the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), only 1,200 records contained information on their mother tongue, thus making impossible any analysis or correlation. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management had not replied to parts of the Joint Inspection Unit questionnaire dealing with human resources management issues and the replies that had been received from other organizations had not delved at length into the particular issue of grievances based on language. The issue of vacancy announcements was among the areas where there might be a potential for discrimination. A meaningful assessment of possible discrimination due to language would be greatly facilitated if the Assembly were to provide additional guidance to the Secretariat as to whether any of its current practices established a distinction, restriction, exclusion or preference based on language that could be qualified as discrimination.

25. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee contained in document A/57/469, said that the reports of the Secretary-General on consultants and individual contractors (A/57/310) and on the employment of retired former staff (A/57/413) were an important tool available to the General Assembly with which to monitor the Secretariat's practice in the use of such personnel. It was therefore essential to continue to improve the presentation of those reports and to submit them in a timely manner. Given that IMIS was now installed in offices away from Headquarters, it would be easier and faster to collect and analyse the data required for the preparation of reports. The Advisory Committee intended to use the content of the report for 2002 during its examination of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

26. In paragraphs 2 to 6 of its report, the Advisory Committee highlighted the need for the Secretariat to review the reasons for the excessive number of contracts that had been issued for administrative services and to review the breakdown of consultants and individual contractors with a view to engaging a greater number of them from developing countries and from countries with economies in transition.

27. Paragraphs 7 to 14 dealt with the question of the employment of retired former staff. The Advisory Committee wished to draw the attention of the Fifth Committee to the comments contained in paragraphs 11 to 14 of its report. In paragraph 10, the Advisory Committee concurred in the proposal of the Secretary-General to set the maximum limit on the employment of retired language staff in terms of workdays rather than as a dollar amount. In so doing, it would not be necessary in the future to consider frequent revisions to the limit in order to accommodate cost-of-living adjustments to the daily rate.

28. The Advisory Committee's comments on the reports of the Secretary-General on monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (A/57/276) and human resources management reform (A/57/293) were contained in paragraphs 15 to 18 of its report. He wished to draw particular attention to paragraph 17, in which the Advisory Committee expressed the opinion that the

Secretary-General should report in a comprehensive manner on the achievements of the human resources management reform when sufficient information was available on the experiences of the Secretariat with the implementation of the reform initiatives.

29. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the staff of the Organization played an essential role in the efficient functioning of the United Nations and represented its most important asset. It was in that context that the Group of 77 and China had welcomed the human resources management reforms and had played an active role in their discussion. The United Nations should have the most efficient and competent staff possible and should ensure that they enjoyed the best possible conditions of service.

30. The Group of 77 and China would like to review at the current session the progress that had been made in the implementation of resolution 55/258, in which the Assembly had provided a set of guidelines for human resources management. Human resources management reform was a continuing process and its objectives should include the institution of a fair system of recruitment, placement and promotion; more equitable geographical representation throughout the United Nations system, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter; appropriate conditions and quality of service for United Nations staff; better communication between staff and the administration; a well-designed and transparent system of delegation of authority together with a proper system of accountability; gender balance; and an effective administration of justice system. The Group of 77 and China would like to participate in the discussions on that item within a broader policy framework that included the elements he had just listed.

31. With regard to the new mobility policy that had been integrated into the staff selection system, adequate incentives should be provided to address work and quality of life issues that affected staff. The Group of 77 and China looked forward to receiving additional information from the Office of Human Resources Management on the implementation of the new mobility policy. It also reiterated its request for clarification of the Secretary-General's proposals concerning contractual arrangements and, in particular, the difference between permanent and continuing contracts and the implications of those proposals for the career prospects and international character of United Nations staff members. The Group would not be in a position to pronounce on those issues without the clarifications sought.

32. The Group of 77 and China was concerned at the delays in the appointment procedures and would like to discuss that subject in the light of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and other relevant reports. It also intended to participate actively in the discussions on the report of the Secretary-General on the establishment of a more robust monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management for the monitoring of all relevant activities of the Secretariat, and in particular the proposed methodology and mechanisms for enhancing such monitoring.

33. The Group of 77 and China was of the view that further delegation of authority must be accompanied by an improved system of accountability, and that human resources management reform should enhance the productivity and quality of work of the Organization and should under no circumstances lead to staff or budget reductions.

34. **Mr. Christiansen** (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that the European Union generally concurred with the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/57/469). On a number of specific issues, however, it wished to have further discussions during the course of the negotiations.

35. The successful implementation of the human resources management reforms was a high priority for the European Union, which noted that considerable progress had been made in that area and that activities aimed at further strengthening human resources policies and procedures would continue. The Union shared the view that emphasis should be placed on using human resources as a strategic tool to drive organizational change and to create the organizational culture envisaged by Member States and by the Secretary-General. To that end, reform policies and programmes should be based on the fundamental principles of responsibility, accountability, transparency, fairness and efficiency. The European Union agreed with the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General should be requested to report to the

Assembly at its fifty-ninth session on the implementation of the human resources management reform.

36. **Ms. Buchanan** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Canada and Australia, said that reform was an ongoing process, rather than an event, and that, encouragingly, the Organization had embraced the concept of continuous learning. The overall objective of human resources policies was to establish fair, transparent and measurable systems and to attract, develop and retain high quality staff. With that in mind, she drew attention to some key elements for future work at the strategic level. First, the Organization needed to implement systems that enabled it to respond to a changing internal and external environment; staff mobility and training were key components of that process. Second, the implementation of human resources policies must be monitored effectively, and managers and departments should be held sufficiently accountable; in that regard, she requested advice on the development of specific programme management plans, and welcomed the more strategic approach to monitoring. Third, information concerning past experience must be used to inform future decisions, and new technologies should be fully integrated into that task. Finally, the need to consult staff throughout the reform process should not be overlooked.

37. While she welcomed the findings in the OIOS report, she noted that, although there were some anomalies in the analysis of appointment and promotion data, there was no systematic or consistent pattern of preference or exclusion. Regrettably, the record of the Organization regarding gender parity was less encouraging. Given that fewer women were recruited and promoted at the P-4 to D-2 levels and that greater numbers of women were leaving the Organization, she hoped that new systems, including programme management plans, would help to restore gender parity. Lastly, she asked whether any budgetary implications would result from the recommendation that limits on the employment of retired former language staff should be based on workdays rather than dollars.

38. **Mr. Brar** (India) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He emphasized the importance of a responsive, innovative human resource base and a rewards system that promoted excellence. In that regard, he welcomed the fact that core professional and managerial competencies had been stressed in vacancy announcements issued over the previous two years. While he welcomed the progress made so far in all the ten building blocks contained in General Assembly resolution A/55/258 on human resources management, he pointed out that the monitoring of reform was an ongoing process.

39. Endorsing the recommendations in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/57/469), he drew attention to the request for a comprehensive report on the achievements of human resources management reform, including relevant activities of the Secretariat regardless of the source of funding. The issue of funding was especially important, since less than a third of the posts subject to geographical distribution were financed from the regular budget. While he welcomed the introduction of the Galaxy system for streamlining recruitment and placement, he failed to understand why it had not been referred to in the report of the Secretary-General. In particular, the generic job descriptions in Galaxy would make a valuable contribution towards enhancing fairness and transparency. The system had the potential to reduce dramatically the possibility of managers writing job descriptions to suit individual candidates. It should also bring down the average recruitment time, and provide for the maintenance of rosters of potential candidates for each occupational group. In order to attract and retain highly competent staff, the Noblemaire and Fleming principles should continue to constitute the basis for determining conditions of service. Nevertheless, the attitude of Member States towards improving conditions of service depended very much on the extent to which they perceived the Organization to be carrying out its mandates in an effective and efficient manner.

40. In that context, the rejuvenation of staff continued to be a matter of priority. He expressed concern that the average age of staff had increased to 46.1 years as at 30 June 2002, contrary to the stated objective in General Assembly resolution A/55/258. He asked for information concerning the meeting of the Staff-Management Coordinating Committee which was to have been held in September or October 2002 regarding staff mobility.

41. While his delegation endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee concerning the availability of IMIS-based information

on consultants and individual contractors on a worldwide basis, he would have preferred the use of the phrase "qualified consultants", stressed in General Assembly resolution A/55/258, in the recommendation in paragraph 5 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/57/469). He agreed with the limit of 125 workdays per year on the employment of retired former staff. However, programme managers must not use their inability to plan for vacancies and to process applications in a timely manner as an excuse to engage retired personnel. He welcomed the appointment of an Ombudsman, which should enhance the administration of internal justice. The study into the ramifications of changing the relative weight of the population factor in determining the composition of the Secretariat was a timely initiative, which he hoped would be pursued during informal negotiations so that a consensus could be reached.

42. **Mr. Sabbagh** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He wished, however, to comment on the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (A/56/956). In that connection, it should be noted that the provisions of the resolution on human resources management which the Assembly had adopted at its fifty-third session had not been respected. According to that resolution, no classification should be based on the fact of belonging to the Middle East region. Failure to observe the provisions of a resolution adopted by the General Assembly undermined the trust given to the Secretariat. That failure required justification and must be denounced.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.18

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
11 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 30 October 2002 at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (*continued*)

Agenda item 118: Human resources management (*continued*)

Human resources management reform (*continued*)

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (*continued*)

Composition of the Secretariat (*continued*)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (*continued*)

Mandatory age of separation

Consultants and individual contractors (*continued*)

Employment of retired former staff (*continued*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-66502 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Capital master plan (*continued*) (A/57/7/Add.4 and A/57/285)

1. **Mr. Iossifov** (Russian Federation), welcoming the detailed report of the Secretary-General on the capital master plan (A/57/285) and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/57/7/Add.4), said that Member States must now take a clear decision on the strategy for further action so that the Secretariat could proceed expeditiously with the practical development of the options and approaches chosen by the General Assembly. It was also important for the host country and the municipal authorities of the City of New York to have a clear idea of their role, which should, in his view, encompass the provision of financial support to the project.

2. His delegation agreed that the first approach, as outlined by the Secretary-General in paragraphs 40 to 42 of his report (A/57/285), represented the most desirable way of implementing the capital master plan. Noting that the cost of the capital master plan would increase at the rate of $35 to $40 million per year in the event of any delay, he proposed that the Secretariat should find ways of expediting the project. In that connection, he looked forward to the submission of more detailed estimates of expenditure. Should the General Assembly choose the first approach, it would be important to ensure that the new building not only met the Organization's current needs, but also took into account its future requirements, as well as being in keeping with the architectural character of the Headquarters complex. Lastly, his delegation endorsed the Advisory Committee's recommendation that a separate and distinct special account should be established for income and expenditures related to the capital master plan.

3. **Mr. Yuwono** (Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. There was now little doubt that the capital master plan had to be implemented in one way or another. The current facilities were more than 50 years old and subject to breakdowns that disrupted United Nations activities and posed health and security risks. Moreover, the alternative of escalating costs for the maintenance and repair of the existing facilities was expected to be less satisfactory in terms of the adequacy of the facilities and more expensive in terms of cost.

4. While in principle the capital master plan should be partly financed by apportioning the expenses among Member States, given the slowdown in the world economy many Member States lacked the resources to fund even needed domestic programmes for reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium development goals. Developing countries were also the hardest hit by the current economic downturn and could not necessarily afford additional contributions to fund the capital master plan. If additional contributions were needed, they should be sought only from those Member States that had the ability to pay.

5. Alternative means of financing the capital master plan should be explored. Given the benefits that accrued to the host nation, it was reasonable to expect greater cooperation from that State, including cooperation in the area of finance. Voluntary contributions from Governments and other sources should be considered, as should the proposal that the plan should be financed through an interest-free loan from Member States. What was important was that the capital master plan should be implemented without delay, that a firm proposal, including financing arrangements, should be prepared for the consideration of the General Assembly at its current session, and that, once implemented, the plan should have sufficient finance and oversight so that it could be carried through in the shortest possible time, with minimum dislocation of the Organization's activities and in accordance with established rules.

6. **Mr. Anderegg** (Switzerland), noting that the United Nations Headquarters complex did not meet current building and fire safety codes, energy efficiency standards or modern security requirements, said that it was imperative to decide expeditiously on the implementation and financing of the capital master plan. He welcomed the efforts of the City of New York in support of the project and expressed appreciation for its recent offer regarding the construction by the United Nations Development Corporation of a swing space building adjacent to the Headquarters complex. That would clearly represent the most desirable solution in terms of project cost and duration, potential cost

overruns and the impact on the Organization's work. It would also allow for the consolidation of United Nations programmes and agencies currently scattered in commercially leased space in nearby buildings, once the Headquarters building was renovated.

7. Having hosted international organizations for more than 100 years, Switzerland had extensive experience of the various options for financing the construction and renovation of premises. In the light of that experience, his delegation would favour the financing of the capital master plan through interest-free loans from Member States. Citing the example of his own Government, he emphasized that host countries had a special responsibility in that regard. His delegation would be reluctant to have recourse to commercial borrowing because of the legal and financial implications. Voluntary contributions should be sought for the upgrading of specific Headquarters facilities. However, the implementation of the capital master plan should not be made conditional on the receipt of such contributions. The baseline scope represented the minimum that was required; his delegation therefore looked forward to discussing the inclusion of the proposed scope options set out in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285).

8. Mr. Ha Chan-ho (Republic of Korea) said that it was by now clear to most delegations that the United Nations Headquarters complex required major repairs and refurbishing and that the current reactive approach was not a viable long-term option, since it would become inefficient and expensive as the buildings aged further. The capital master plan was therefore the only suitable approach and the only question that remained was how to implement the plan in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

9. The report of the Secretary-General (A/57/285) proposed a number of options for the implementation of the capital master plan. In the view of his delegation, the scope of the work should not be limited to satisfying current building and safety requirements but should also be designed to address future needs. Consideration should also be given to the possibility of adding certain elements of the proposed scope options to the baseline scope

10. With regard to the method of implementation of the plan, his delegation supported the first approach, which would consist in relocating all the functions of the Headquarters complex for the duration of the construction period in order to reduce the risk of cost overruns, delays, disturbance and perceived risk of exposure to asbestos. That approach would also lower costs and shorten the refurbishment period by at least one year. He understood that the host city had indicated its willingness to consider the construction of a new building, which would provide swing space during the refurbishment period. As far as his delegation was aware, however, that offer had not been made in a formal commitment and further administrative and legislative actions were needed for its substantiation. His delegation would welcome clarification of the host city's intentions in the matter.

11. On the question of financing, the host Government, the City of New York and the State of New York had played an important role in financing the construction of the current Headquarters complex. In many other cases, host Governments had made significant contributions to the maintenance of United Nations assets in their respective countries. Whatever approach was taken, the substantial financial and non-financial support of the host Government and local authorities would be essential for the successful implementation of the capital master plan. His delegation also noted the Secretary-General's indication that financing might take the form of an interest-free loan to be repaid from additional assessed contributions over time. The key to the successful implementation of the plan was to secure stable financing and, since delays in any phase of its development could have a significant impact on the overall cost of the project, the funding arrangement should be developed as early as possible and submitted to the General Assembly for its consideration. In that regard, mutual understanding and close cooperation between the Organization and the host Government were essential.

12. Development of the project, however, should not be contingent on the final decision on funding arrangements. His delegation supported the proposal that the Secretariat should be authorized to proceed with the design process for the first approach and that the amount of $22.5 million should be appropriated for the biennium 2002-2003, pending a final decision on funding arrangements by the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

13. The capital master plan was a project of enormous complexity that required the assistance of numerous experts and consultants. The management

team should therefore have the professional capability to supervise the implementation of the project, and the relevant regulations and rules of the United Nations should be applied at all stages.

14. **Mr. Niwa** (Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services) welcomed the broad agreement in the Committee on the necessity of implementing the capital master plan. The Advisory Committee had conducted a thorough review of the Secretary-General's proposals, producing strong recommendations with which the Administration fully concurred. The General Assembly was now being asked to send a signal that would allow the Administration and the host Government authorities to move forward with the project. The next steps in the process would be: a decision by the Assembly on the scope options presented; an indication of the wishes of Member States with respect to the proposal of the City of New York for the construction of a swing space building adjacent to the Headquarters complex; and approval by the Assembly of the funding required for the preparation of detailed design documents in 2003 and 2004.

15. Turning to the concerns raised by Member States, he said that the Administration recognized the importance of oversight with respect to the development and implementation of the capital master plan and the role of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and the Board of Auditors in that regard. It also acknowledged the need to comply with the financial regulations and rules of the United Nations. His Office had already made a presentation to OIOS on certain substantive aspects of the capital master plan and had briefed the Board of Auditors the previous week.

16. The City of New York had done everything possible to facilitate the capital master plan. The information on the new swing space and consolidation building proposal contained in annex I to the report of ACABQ (A/57/7/Add.4) had been provided by the City and the United Nations Development Corporation with a view to ensuring that Member States were fully apprised of all aspects of the proposal. A timely decision was required from the General Assembly so that the City could request the necessary approvals and proceed with the construction of the new building within the proposed time frame.

17. With regard to financing, the Secretary-General considered that the precedent of 50 years earlier represented the best model for the project. He was therefore proposing that similar arrangements should be put in place for the capital master plan. The Administration understood that the project would have to be clearly defined in order for Governments to approve funding, and every effort would be made to find appropriate private-sector donors. The proposed advisory board would seek to achieve a balance between the wishes of donors and the need to maintain architectural harmony in a non-commercial environment. Contracts for the implementation of the project would be awarded following an international competitive bidding process. While good management would be vital in preventing cost overruns, the time factor would also be critical, since any delay would add to the cost of the project. It was therefore important to ensure that the decision-making process itself did not become a bottleneck.

18. Other concerns raised by Member States, including the design and location of conference rooms, possible disruption to meetings, the impact on parking facilities, the level of security envisaged and the link to other security initiatives, the involvement of the funds and programmes and the cost benefits of consolidation, would be addressed in informal consultations.

Agenda item 118: Human resources management (*continued*)

Human resources management reform (continued) (*A/57/293 and A/57/469*)

Monitoring capacity in the Office of Human Resources Management (*continued*) (A/57/276 and A/57/469)

Composition of the Secretariat (*continued*) (A/57/414; A/C.5/56/L.7)

Amendments to the Staff Rules (*continued*) (A/57/126)

Mandatory age of separation (A/56/701 and A/56/846; A/C.5/56/CRP.1 and Add.1)

Consultants and individual contractors (*continued*) (A/57/310 and A/57/469)

Employment of retired former staff (*continued*) (A/57/413 and A/57/469)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on possible discrimination due to nationality, race, sex, religion and language in recruitment, promotion and placement (*continued*) (A/56/956 and Add.1)

19. **Mr. Hao** Bin (China) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Human resources management reform was an important component of United Nations reform. In that connection, his delegation welcomed such measures as the delegation of authority for recruitment and promotion, the development of electronic human resources management tools, the streamlining of policies and rules, the promulgation of a mobility policy, the enhancement of human resources planning, the introduction of generic job profiles and the establishment of a comprehensive career development system.

20. Delegation of authority, while necessary, must be accompanied by steps to strengthen the monitoring capacity of the Office of Human Resources Management so as to prevent such problems as cronyism, abuse of power and discrimination. He noted with satisfaction the introduction of programme management plans and human resources action plans, the setting up by The Office of Human Resources Management of a system to monitor compliance by managers with the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) and the establishment of the Accountability Panel. In his view, the Office should monitor all aspects of human resources management. The division of responsibilities in the area of human resources management between the Office and other Departments should be more clearly delineated, and new approaches to monitoring, including the introduction of measurable targets, should be explored.

21. Concerning the geographical distribution of staff, he said that, while there had been a reduction in the number of unrepresented Member States, the situation of the underrepresented Member States had not improved significantly, and the representation of developing countries in posts at the middle and senior levels remained low. In order to rectify that situation, the Office of Human Resources Management should urge departments and offices of the Secretariat to recruit young professionals who had passed national competitive recruitment examinations. He noted that 54 per cent of the qualified candidates in 2001 had yet to be recruited. The recruitment of external candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries to fill vacancies at the middle and senior levels would also help to achieve equitable geographical distribution.

22. The average age of the Secretariat staff was somewhat high, and his delegation was concerned that increasing the mandatory age of separation for staff members appointed prior to 1 January 1990 to 62 years might exacerbate the situation, as well as adversely affecting gender balance and job prospects for young professionals and women in the Secretariat. Given the complexity of those issues, further studies were needed before any decision was taken.

23. Lastly, while there was a need for more flexible contractual arrangements that were responsive to the organizational needs of the United Nations, it was important for the Secretary-General to consult with Member States, as well as staff, on that issue.

24. **Mr. Yeaw** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia attached great importance to the Organization's human resources. Without its staff, even with the most advanced information technology available, the Organization would find it difficult to carry out its important work. While two years was too short a period to see tangible results, the Secretariat should continue to implement human resources policies and programmes to further improve the Organization's day-to-day activities based on the principles of justice, equitable geographical distribution, transparency and gender balance. For their part, staff members should be of the high quality demanded by Member States. His delegation agreed that it was time to consolidate and institutionalize all the changes that had been made thus far. It noted with satisfaction that geographical distribution had been prioritized and that the issue of the mobility of staff at the junior Professional level would be addressed.

25. The introduction of the new web-based Galaxy system for the recruitment of new staff members symbolized the Organization's desire to move forward with the times. When fully operational, the system would not only reduce the length of the recruitment process but also enhance the transparency and efficiency of the placement process.

26. **Mr. Allyev** (Azerbaijan) said that a sound human resources policy was fundamental for the effectiveness and sustainability of the Organization's work and his delegation was therefore pleased to acknowledge the success of the reform programmes that had been implemented over the previous four years. The introduction of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) and the Galaxy staff selection system would considerably increase the Organization's ability to attract and retain staff of the highest calibre and would make it possible to avoid the use of expensive external consultants. His delegation looked forward to receiving from the Secretary-General a comprehensive analytical report on the achievements of human resources management reform, with sufficient statistical data, at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

27. In section IV, paragraph 8, of its resolution 55/258, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to develop a programme and set specific targets for achieving equitable geographical representation for all unrepresented and underrepresented Member States. Under the new system, whereby heads of departments or offices were responsible and accountable for making final decisions on the selection of new staff, they were required to select candidates for recruitment who were considered to be the best suited to the functions of the post in question and were also required to take into account the Organization's human resources objectives and targets as reflected in the departmental human resources action plan, especially with regard to geographical representation and gender (A/57/293, para. 76 (c)). His delegation wondered whether managers might consider those requirements as no more than recommendations leaving them room for recruitment decisions based mainly on operational needs and without due attention to the factor of geographical representation. His delegation believed that might be one of the reasons why some Member States were overrepresented in the Secretariat, a number were unrepresented and many more were either underrepresented or represented at a level below the midpoint of their respective range. There was a danger that, under a decentralized system for decision-making on recruitment, such imbalances might increase unless there was an appropriate mechanism to ensure proper implementation of the principle of equitable geographical representation, which was fundamental to the Organization.

28. His delegation also attached importance to the issue of attracting suitable young professionals to the Organization through national competitive examinations. Although the efforts of the Secretariat in that direction had resulted in an increase in the number of countries invited to participate in the national competitive examinations between 1998 and 2003, the number of Professional staff recruited through national competitive examinations remained low and many of the successful candidates remained on the roster of candidates without actually being recruited. His delegation believed that the root of the problem was reflected in General Assembly resolution 55/258, section IV, paragraph 12, which states that some programme managers were still reluctant to recruit candidates selected through national competitive examinations. That situation needed to be corrected.

29. In conclusion, he drew attention to the unfavourable position of those developing and transitional countries that were represented below the midpoint of their range with the lower limit equal to 1. Employment in the Secretariat of even a single representative from such countries would exclude them from a list of countries where national competitive examinations could be held and they would have practically no chance of reaching the midpoint of their desirable range and might even become unrepresented again if their single representative were to leave the employment of the Organization. His delegation considered that the rules on the holding of national competitive examinations should be revised in order to accommodate the interest and concerns of the Member States that were represented below the midpoint of their desirable range with a lower limit equal to 1.

30. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Considerable progress had already been achieved towards human resources management reform but the process needed to be consolidated and institutionalized further. What was needed was a genuine reform designed to establish an objective, transparent and responsive human resources management system that would ensure a fair system of recruitment, placement and promotion, a transparent system of delegation of authority coupled with accountability, and an effective system for the administration of justice. His delegation would like reform to ensure the recruitment and retention of high-

quality staff on the basis of equitable geographical distribution in line with the obligations under the Charter. In that context, he regretted that currently over 72 per cent of staff members were from only 25 Member States, a situation that called for corrective action.

31. His delegation welcomed the innovative uses of information technology by the Secretariat in the area of human resources management, in particular the introduction of the Galaxy staff selection system which, his delegation hoped, would improve the recruitment process, in particular by reducing lead time.

32. His delegation found merit in the recommendation of the Secretary-General on staff mobility; horizontal and vertical mobility should be part of a comprehensive career development system. While mobility was sometimes said to erode institutional memory and knowledge and to create a class of generalists in the system, it was also true that it brought fresh blood and fresh ideas. There was a need for a balanced approach. While the delegation of authority was a method of ensuring effective management of the Organization, it was important that the managers should be made accountable for their decisions. His delegation would appreciate further details from the Secretariat as to how the question of monitoring the performance of managers would be approached.

33. There had been some improvement since 2000 in the selection of consultants and individual contractors from a wide geographical area and his delegation wished the Secretariat to continue its efforts to achieve further improvement, and in particular to engage more consultants and contractors from the developing countries.

34. Although the number of countries that had been invited to participate in the national competitive examinations had increased between 1998 and 2003, the situation was still far from satisfactory. Closer collaboration with Member States that were underrepresented or unrepresented in the Secretariat would be essential to attract young professionals from those countries.

35. **Mr. Al-Mansour** (Kuwait) said that his delegation supported the statement made by Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was vital to implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258, which had been adopted as a comprehensive set of guidelines for the management of human resources.

36. The Secretary-General's reform was designed to enhance administrative systems through strategic change with a view to improving the quality and performance of the staff as well as enhancing the international civil service in general. A great deal had already been achieved along those lines. To that end, it was essential to have well-qualified managers who were responsible for the administration of their staff, as well as highly motivated and well-qualified staff. His delegation particularly wished to place on record its admiration for the staff, many of whom carried out their duties in difficult circumstances, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

37. His delegation had read with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414), which indicated that there had been some improvement in the proportion of unrepresented and underrepresented Member States in the Secretariat. In that connection, he was pleased to note that the Secretariat included a national of his own country in a senior post; he hoped that it would be possible to increase the number of Kuwaiti nationals so as to bring the representation of his country within the desirable range. Further efforts were still required to work towards the equitable geographical distribution of staff, which should be a fundamental component of the recruitment process, particularly in order to ensure that the incumbents of a number of senior posts were nationals of developing countries and that senior posts were not filled exclusively by nationals of a limited number of countries.

38. **Mr. Ham Sang-wook** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation was pleased to note the progress that had been made in the important task of human resources management reform. The reports on that matter covered a relatively short period of time, as the Advisory Committee had noted, and his delegation would like to be kept informed of the future progress of the reform.

39. The delegation of authority for human resources management should be accompanied by a clear understanding on the part of managers of their responsibilities and mandates and by sound mechanisms for monitoring accountability. His delegation looked forward to receiving a detailed

report on the system of the delegation of authority and the internal monitoring mechanism at the next session of the General Assembly.

40. He welcomed the progress that had been made in the use of information technology in the staff recruitment process, in particular the launch of the Galaxy system for staff selection. His delegation hoped that further development of the staff selection and evaluation system would promote transparency and enhance the monitoring capacity.

41. His delegation supported the general objective of managed mobility to ensure a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced staff. Managed mobility would improve the activities of the regional offices and strengthen the partnership among the staff. However, his delegation considered that there might be a case for further measures to promote mobility between Headquarters and the regional offices.

42. His delegation noted the improvements that had been achieved in recent years within the Secretariat with regard to geographical distribution and gender balance. The national competitive examination programme for entry into the Secretariat had proved to be an effective tool for ensuring the widest possible geographical representation and, in particular, for selecting the best qualified candidates from unrepresented or underrepresented Member States.

43. It was a matter of concern that the average age of the staff currently stood at 46.1 years and that almost 60 per cent of all Secretariat staff were over 45 years of age. His delegation hoped that the anticipated large number of retirements within the next five years would be taken as an opportunity to rejuvenate the staff of the Organization through recruitment. In conclusion, he reiterated his delegation's concern about the possible negative impact of a change in the mandatory age of separation of staff members.

44. **Mr. Yuwono** (Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Further efforts were required to reduce the level of underrepresentation of Member States in the United Nations Secretariat and, especially to reduce the number of unrepresented Member States, without lowering the quality of the personnel recruited. His delegation also supported efforts to ensure the adequate representation of women in the Secretariat, more particularly in senior positions.

45. The Secretary-General should continue to improve accountability and responsibility in the reform of human resources management. He commended the Secretary-General on his reform efforts, in particular, his emphasis on making the United Nations a results-oriented Organization. Efforts to streamline the Organization and improve its efficiency, thereby making economies and improving the delivery of goods and services and the implementation of programme activities, should be encouraged.

46. Since the members of the Secretariat were a key resource of the United Nations, efforts to recruit, train and retain staff were essential to building the future of the Organization. In that context, efforts to empower managers, improve their skills and increase their responsiveness to the objectives of the Organization were all highly important. The development of electronic tools and resources should also help to improve the efficiency of human resources and the monitoring of progress in the reform process and in the achievement of the Organization's goals. His Government favoured efforts to enhance the efficiency of the Organization, improve geographical representation in the Secretariat and bring the Organization up to date through the use of modern technology. Such changes must, however, be considered in the context of maximizing the benefits for the Organization, given its limited resources.

47. **Ms. Vrhovac** (Croatia) said that her delegation supported the Secretary-General's human resources management reforms. It noted with satisfaction the changes that had been introduced thus far and encouraged further improvements aimed at ensuring that the Organization's human resources management policies and practices were fully in line with its operational needs. All changes required time, however, particularly in an Organization as complex as the United Nations.

48. In order for the Organization to be more efficient, it must have qualified staff representing all of its Member States. The number of unrepresented Member States had declined during the five-year period from 1998 to 2002, but further steps were needed to improve geographical representation in the Secretariat. With a total of seven of its nationals employed by the Secretariat, Croatia was within its desirable range of representation, but still below the midpoint with regard to the element of weighted staff position. That fact pointed to another problem that affected new Member

States, namely, the absence of nationals appointed to senior posts.

49. Her delegation supported the concept of national competitive examinations as the most efficient method of recruiting qualified candidates from underrepresented Member States. The recent increase in the number of countries participating in the national competitive examination was heartening, as was the increase in the number of examination candidates who had been recruited by the Organization in 2002. It remained unclear, however, whether the length of the recruitment process had been shortened in comparison with previous national competitive examinations.

50. With regard to recruitment, placement and promotion activities, the introduction of the new web-based Galaxy system should enable the Organization both to attract and retain staff of the highest quality and to strengthen its management capacity. Moreover, a comprehensive and systematic technology-based staff selection system should considerably shorten the whole recruitment process.

51. On the subject of gender balance, her delegation acknowledged the efforts being made to improve gender distribution within the Secretariat. However, although the number of women in the Professional category had increased, much more needed to be done to achieve an acceptable gender balance at the senior level.

52. **Mr. Al-Atrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) supported the statement made by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation welcomed the reform efforts of the Secretary-General, which were designed to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization. The staff, whether in the Professional or in the General Service category, were the principal element in the implementation of the proposed reforms; it was therefore important to involve them in the process and take their views into account as an essential element in the successful reform of human resources management.

53. It was a matter of concern to his delegation that the principle of the equitable geographical distribution of staff, including consultants, had not been satisfactorily complied with; the post structure at the senior levels and elsewhere in the Secretariat did not reflect that principle. His delegation therefore hoped that the Galaxy system for the selection of staff would lead to an improvement in the representation of the unrepresented and underrepresented Member States and would improve transparency and fairness in the recruitment process. His delegation looked forward to the submission by the Secretary-General of a comprehensive report on that and other matters connected with the reform of human resources management.

54. His delegation welcomed the appointment of the Ombudsman and hoped that the person appointed would receive the necessary support and would be given the authority to carry out fully the duties of the post. Increased coordination with other elements of the justice system, in particular the Joint Appeals Board, would strengthen the justice system in the United Nations and would achieve cost-savings and avoid duplication. It was particularly important to maintain the independence of the Organization's system of justice.

55. The delegation of authority required an improved system of accountability and oversight in monitoring the performance of programme managers, in particular to ensure that they were complying with the Staff Regulations and the Financial Regulations, as well as the resolutions of the General Assembly.

56. The reinvigoration of the Organization required measures to ensure the appointment of well-qualified young staff and his delegation hoped that substantial progress in that regard would be achieved as current staff members retired. Greater emphasis should be placed on providing training to enhance the skills of staff members.

57. **Ms. Nakian** (United States of America) said that her delegation generally concurred with the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/57/469). It noted with satisfaction the considerable progress that the Secretary-General and the staff of the Secretariat had made thus far towards creating an organizational culture that was more responsive and results-oriented, rewarded creativity and innovation and promoted continuous learning, high performance and managerial excellence. A great deal had been done to improve accountability, transparency, fairness and efficiency in the global Secretariat. The new staff selection system had further integrated recruitment, placement, managed mobility and promotion by, among other things, streamlining and rationalizing the selection process and giving programme managers more authority to make

staffing decisions. The shift from a voluntary to a managed approach to mobility was particularly welcome. In addition, the managed reassignment programme for junior Professional staff and the new measures for time-limited post occupancy and required lateral moves for promotion would help to encourage mobility and facilitate movement between locations and functions. That would in turn develop a more multi-skilled workforce of international civil servants and provide more varied and rewarding career opportunities.

58. While the changes that had been introduced to date would be consolidated and institutionalized in the years ahead, it was important constantly to pursue improvements that strengthened the vitality of the Organization. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the innovative ideas put forward in section VI of the Secretary-General's report on the strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change (A/57/387), and the measures that had been proposed to enhance career opportunities for staff in the General Service category, help staff balance their professional and private lives, and rejuvenate the Organization by recruiting more people early in their careers. Those measures would help to foster excellence in the workforce and assist international civil servants in carrying out the important priorities set forth in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

59. Her delegation agreed that more needed to be done to achieve geographical diversity and gender balance, in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter. In that connection, the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/57/414) was a valuable reference for Member States to gauge the Secretariat's efforts in implementing the provisions of the Charter and the relevant resolutions dealing with representation. Her delegation was therefore disappointed to learn of the increase in the number of staff from overrepresented countries, even as many countries remained unrepresented, underrepresented or below their desirable ranges. Nationals of the United States of America fell within the latter category. The past several years had seen a dramatic decline in the number of United States nationals in the Secretariat, particularly at the senior Professional levels, and the Secretariat must take appropriate measures to address that concern.

60. Lastly, efforts must be made to measure and quantify the outcome of the reform proposals and initiatives. Such an evaluation, including identification of lessons learned, should be an integral part of the various reform initiatives. In that regard, her delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Secretary-General should prepare a comprehensive report on human resources management reform for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

61. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/213 and with the decision taken by the Committee at its 13th meeting, **the Chairman** invited the President of the United Nations Staff Union to make a statement.

62. **Ms. Waters** (President of the United Nations Staff Union) said that when the Secretary-General had first begun his programme of reform in 1997, the staff representatives had fully supported the goal of creating an organizational culture that was responsive and results-oriented, rewarded creativity and innovation and promoted continuous learning, higher performance and managerial excellence. Since then, however, managers had been significantly empowered while the ability of the staff to influence and defend their futures had significantly weakened. The Staff Union would like to see a fair balance restored.

63. The Staff Union still considered career appointments to be the cornerstone of the international civil service and necessary for a fully confident and independent staff. Career appointments did not mean employment for life, and meaningful reviews could be conducted every five years to ensure that staff continued to merit their career appointments. Moreover, while continuing contracts lent more stability and financial support to staff currently on fixed-term contracts, they should not be seen as a replacement for career appointments. The Staff Union appealed to the Committee to request the Secretariat to develop, in consultation with staff representatives, a proposal that would allow a sufficient number of staff to retain career appointments. The Union had proposed to the Staff-Management Coordination Committee that all serving staff in the General Service and Professional categories who met the criteria for permanent appointment at the time they were hired should be converted to permanent status by virtue of their acquired rights and taking into account the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

64. On the subject of career development, she said that while organizational values, performance management and human resources planning were elements of a solid personnel system, they were not replacements for a true career development system, which should identify clear career paths and assist qualified staff in placement. Staff were willing to participate in training and to obtain higher levels of education, but they should not make such investments without an accompanying commitment that the Administration would do its part to provide the framework for a career with the Organization. The Fifth Committee should continue to impress upon the Administration that a system of career development for all categories of staff needed to be established.

65. The G-to-P examination was an integral part of career development. The Staff Union fully understood that Member States were anxious to have their nationals recruited as junior Professional staff. However, the Charter of the United Nations emphasized that the paramount consideration in the employment of staff was the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. In keeping with the best practices of employers, internal staff must have promotion opportunities that were commensurate with their abilities.

66. Staff in the General Service category were highly qualified and motivated and represented an increasing number of countries. Encouraging the promotion of those staff members to the Professional category would benefit the Organization, since high morale would be maintained among a group of experienced staff members who held much of the Organization's institutional memory. The improved morale would translate into increased productivity and greater relevance for United Nations programmes.

67. In his second report on reform (A/57/387), the Secretary-General had supported reconsideration of the issue. The Staff Union respectfully requested Member States to restore the principle that staff in the General Service category should be promoted to the Professional category through the G-to-P examination and to restore the former 30 per cent quota for filling posts through that examination. It also appealed to Member States to request the Secretariat to develop, through staff-management consultations, comprehensive alternatives to the current G-to-P examination for the consideration of the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and to suspend the alignment of the G-to-P examination with the national competitive examinations until the review of the proposed alternatives was completed.

68. The Staff Union fully supported the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's second report, which sought to expand opportunities for staff in the General Service category and to help staff balance their professional and private lives. Those were much needed improvements for staff members and the Union hoped that the proposals would have the full support of Member States.

69. On the question of accountability, she pointed out that, while the Secretary-General had established a number of monitoring mechanisms to ensure that departments fulfilled their mandates efficiently, there were no mechanisms for personal accountability that dealt with individual abuses by managers. The staff representatives believed that the basis for individual accountability began with the internal justice system. The current system did not enjoy the confidence of the staff and needed to be made independent and brought directly under the authority of the Secretary-General. The current system of peer review was beneficial only if the decision on the final action to be taken was also made by peers. In the case of the Joint Appeals Board, recommendations made by peers were often overturned by the Administration when they were favourable to the appellant. Statistics on justice were misleading. The Administration agreed with the Joint Appeals Board when the Board's findings were not in favour of the appellant, but when findings supported the appellant, management's confidence in the Board dropped considerably. The alignment of certain aspects of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal with the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal had not been seriously considered during staff-management consultations and should be re-examined. The Staff Union strongly encouraged the Fifth Committee to recommend that a comprehensive review of the internal justice system should be immediately undertaken, in consultation with the staff representatives. Without major changes in the internal justice system, true accountability of managers would never be achieved.

70. While the words "accountability" and "responsibility" were repeatedly linked to the current reform, there were clear examples of the lack of both in the implementation of policies. Interpreters sat in

booths the size of closets, with poorly circulating air that contained potentially hazardous particulates. Most recently, they had been denied water in their booths. All members of the Administration agreed that interpreters worked under horrendous conditions and that water was essential, yet no one addressed the problem. Until such time as simple accountability issues were addressed, it would be difficult for any staff member to believe that more serious issues would be dealt with appropriately.

71. The tragedy of 11 September 2001 had conveyed a clear message that no one was safe. However, the answer to safety and security was not to build walls around delegates, treat staff members with suspicion, cast out retired colleagues and deny entry to the public. The United Nations belonged to the people of the world and should not be seen as a prison to keep staff members and delegates in and the rest of the world out. Even though threat levels were high everywhere in the world, the United Nations must not become an Organization that hid behind walls in fear, but rather an Organization that showed determination faithfully to continue its mission.

72. In conclusion, she said that it would be useful to both the Organization and its staff if Member States would encourage all managers to undertake consultations with their staff representatives in good faith. There had been several recent instances of managers informing staff representatives of decisions rather than giving them an opportunity to offer advice before the decision was taken. Best practices around the world indicated that the most successful enterprises were those that relied heavily on the wisdom of those who did the work.

73. She wished to draw the attention of the members of the Committee to an annex to her statement that was available at the back of the meeting room. The annex contained the views of the staff of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management on the restructuring of the Department.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.

United Nations A/C.5/57/SR.19

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 November 2002

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 19th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 1 November 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma ..... (Nepal)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

Contents

Agenda item 17: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions

(c) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee

(d) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal

(e) International Civil Service Commission

(i) Appointment of members of the Commission

(ii) Designation of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Commission

(j) Appointment of a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee

Organization of work

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

02-67255 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

Agenda item 17: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments

1. **The Chairman** drew attention to rule 92 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly concerning elections by secret ballot and to paragraph 16 of decision 34/401 on the same subject.

(a) Appointment of members of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/57/101; A/C.5/57/5)

2. **The Chairman** drew attention to rules 155 and 156 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and said that the General Assembly needed to appoint five persons to fill the vacancies that would arise in the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on 31 December 2002. The Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly (in document A/C.5/57/5) of the nomination of six persons by their respective Governments. Since the number of candidates from three regional groups, namely the Group of African States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of Western European and Other States was equal to the number of vacancies for those regional groups, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of the four candidates endorsed by their respective regional groups to the Advisory Committee for a three-year term beginning on January 2003.

3. *Mr. Hernandez (Dominican Republic), Mr. Mazet (Germany), Ms. McLurg (United States of America) and Mr. Zahran (Egypt) were recommended for appointment or reappointment to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.*

4. **The Chairman**, after recalling the provisions of rule 94 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, invited the Committee to elect by secret ballot one candidate from the Group of Eastern European States.

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Agyeman (Ghana), Ms. Samayoa-Recari (Guatemala) and Ms. Wahab (Indonesia) acted as tellers.

6. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	178
Invalid ballots:	2
Number of valid ballots:	176
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	176
Required majority:	89
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Kuznetsov (Russian Federation)	106
Mr. Aptsiauri (Georgia)	70

7. *Having obtained the required majority, Mr. Kuznetsov (Russian Federation) was recommended for appointment to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.*

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on Contributions (A/57/102; A/C.5/57/6)

8. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to rules 158 and 159 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and said that the Assembly needed to appoint six persons to fill the vacancies that would arise in the Committee on Contributions on 31 December 2002. The Secretary-General had informed the General Assembly (in document A/C.5/57/6) of the names of six persons nominated by their respective Governments. Since the number of candidates from the four regional groups, namely the Group of Asian States, the Group of Eastern European States, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, and the Group of Western European and Other States, was equal to the number of vacancies for those regional groups, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment or reappointment of the six candidates endorsed by their respective regional groups to the Committee on Contributions for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2003.

9. *Mr. Gurgel de Alencar (Brazil), Mr. Mareyev (Russian Federation), Mr. Meijerman (Netherlands), Mr. Hae-yun Park (Republic of Korea), Mr. Sessi (Italy) and Mr. Wu Gang (China) were recommended for appointment or reappointment to the Committee on Contributions.*

(c) Confirmation of the appointment of members of the Investments Committee (A/57/103; A/C.5/57/7)

10. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to document A/C.5/57/7, in which the

Secretary-General submitted for confirmation by the General Assembly the reappointment of three members of the Investments Committee for a three-year term of office beginning on 1 January 2003. Since the number of candidates was equal to the number of vacancies, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly confirmation of the three persons appointed by the Secretary-General to the Investments Committee.

11. *Ms. Bovich (United States of America), Mr. Ohta (Japan) and Mr. Stormonth-Darling (United Kingdom) were recommended for reappointment to the Investments Committee.*

(d) Appointment of members of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal (A/57/104; A/C.5/57/8)

12. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to document A/C.5/57/8, in which the Secretary-General communicated to the General Assembly the names of two persons nominated by their respective Governments to fill vacancies that would arise in the membership of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal on 31 December 2002. Since the number of candidates was equal to the number of vacancies, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment or reappointment of the two candidates to the United Nations Administrative Tribunal.

13. *Mr. Haugh (Ireland) and Ms. Scott (United States of America) were recommended for appointment or reappointment to the United Nations Administrative Tribunal.*

(e) International Civil Service Commission

(i) Appointment of members of the Commission (A/57/105; A/C.5/57/9)

14. **The Chairman** said that, as indicated in document A/57/105, the terms of office of five members of the International Civil Service Commission would expire on 31 December 2002. Document A/C.5/57/9 contained the names of seven persons nominated by their respective Governments to fill the resulting vacancies. Since the number of candidates from the group of Eastern European States and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States was equal to the number of vacancies for those groups, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the reappointment of the two candidates endorsed by their respective regional groups to the International Civil Service Commission for a four-year term beginning on 1 January 2003.

15. *Mr. Sanchis Muñoz (Argentina) and Mr. Wyzner (Poland) were recommended for reappointment to the International Civil Service Commission.*

16. **The Chairman**, drawing attention to rule 94 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, invited the Committee to elect by secret ballot two candidates from the Group of African States.

17. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Al-Mansour (Kuwait), Ms. Vrhovac (Croatia) and Mr. Wins (Uruguay) acted as tellers.*

18. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	180
Invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	180
Abstentions:	1
Number of members voting:	179
Required majority:	90
Number of votes obtained:	
Mr. Bel Hadj Amor (Tunisia):	159
Mr. Boateng (Ghana):	140
Ms. Daddah (Mauritania):	48

19. *Having obtained the required majority, Mr. Bel Hadj Amor (Tunisia) and Mr. Boateng (Ghana) were recommended for appointment or reappointment to the International Civil Service Commission.*

20. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to elect by secret ballot one candidate from the Group of Western European and Other States.

21. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Agyeman (Ghana), Ms. Samayoa-Recari (Guatemala) and Ms. Wahab (Indonesia) acted as tellers.*

22. *A vote was taken by secret ballot.*

Number of ballot papers:	180
Invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	180
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	180
Required majority:	91
Number of votes obtained:	
Ms. Szlazak (Canada):	107
Mr. Stöckl (Germany):	73

23. *Having obtained the required majority, Ms. Szlazak (Canada) was recommended for appointment to the International Civil Service Commission.*

(ii) Designation of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Commission (A/57/105; A/C.5/57/9/Add.1)

24. **The Chairman** drew attention to document A/C.5/57/9/Add.1, in which the Secretary-General communicated to the General Assembly the names of two candidates nominated by their respective Governments for the posts of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively, of the International Civil Service Commission. Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the reappointment of the two candidates as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively, of the International Civil Service Commission.

25. *Mr. Bel Hadj Amor (Tunisia) and Mr. Wyzner (Poland) were recommended for reappointment as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, respectively, of the International Civil Service Commission.*

(j) Appointment of a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee (A/57/111; A/C.5/57/10)

26. **The Chairman** drew attention to documents A/57/111 and A/C.5/57/10, in which the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly of the resignation of Mr. Vislykh (Russian Federation) from the United Nations Staff Pension Committee, and of the nomination of Mr. Kovalenko (Russian Federation) to fill the remainder of Mr. Vislykh's term of office. Since there were no other candidates, he took it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly the appointment of Mr. Vislykh to the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for a term beginning on the date of appointment and expiring on 31 December 2003.

27. *Mr. Kovalenko (Russian Federation) was recommended for appointment to the United Nations Staff Pension Committee.*

Organization of work

28. **The Chairman**, drawing attention to the programme of work for the week beginning Monday, 4 November 2002, said that, henceforth, when the Committee began consideration of an agenda item, only introductory statements by the Secretariat would be heard on the first day, and that general statements by delegations would be made at the next meeting at which the item was considered. He noted that, during the month of Ramadan, afternoon meetings would begin at 2.30 p.m. and end at 5.30 p.m.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.